



GIFT OF  
MICHAEL REESE









# Five American Politicians

## A Study in the Evolution of American Politics

I. Aaron Burr, Father of the Political Machine

II. DeWitt Clinton, Father of the Spoils System

III. Martin Van Buren, Nationalizer of the Machine

IV. Henry Clay, Master and Victim of Compromise  
and Coalition

V. Stephen A. Douglas, Defender of State's Rights  
and of Nationalism

By

Samuel P. Orth



Cleveland

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REESE

TO THE

REPRESENTATIVE

*"Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them; and as Governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined too. Wherefore Governments rather depend upon men than men upon Governments. Let men be good, and the Government cannot be bad. If it be ill, they will cure it. But if men be bad, they will endeavor to warp and spoil it to their turn."*

WM. PENN

*Preface to his Constitution  
of Pennsylvania.*

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TO  
FRANCIS H. HASEROT

Successful Merchant

Useful Citizen

Loyal Friend

This volume is respectfully inscribed



## FOREWORD.

These biographical sketches were prepared by the author, not as a formal treatise upon political science, nor a new fragment of political theory wrested from the realms of research, nor yet as a novel contribution to political history; but to tell simply and informally the life-stories of five of our great American politicians.

For into the life-story of a leader is woven the history of his day. And thus in the developing personalities of our political leaders, in their intense ambitions, in their statecraft, their designing, their talents, and their follies, can be discovered the political development of our people.

In the hope that they may contribute to a clearer understanding of the growth of American politics, these biographical fragments are sent forth.

While the author has searched the best libraries of the country for his material, he begs to acknowledge his especial dependence upon the following works: Parton's "Aaron Burr," Shepherd's "Martin Van Buren," Schurz's "Henry Clay," Nicolay & Hay's "Abraham Lincoln," and Burgess's "The Middle Period."

S. P. O.

Cleveland, October 2, 1905.



# AARON BURR

FATHER OF THE POLITICAL MACHINE







UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA



TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS



## AARON BURR

### FATHER OF THE POLITICAL MACHINE

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**A**FTER the Revolution, chaos. Nothing could exceed the confusion and petty antagonisms of the thirteen states at the close of the Revolutionary War. The bond that had united their sympathies and joined their powers was loosened by the tidings of peace, and the victorious regiments marched home to discover that the feeling of Nationalism had been largely confined to the army, and that narrow, provincial sentiments prevailed in the local districts.

After the war of destruction must follow the era of construction. That remarkable group of men who had guided the affairs of the country in war now set themselves nobly to the great task of building a nation from the fragments that had survived the struggle.

It is necessary at the outset of this study of American politics to remember that the problem of our fathers was not only to provide the machinery of government, — a national union with all of its subordinate and coördinate parts, — but they must also organize and direct the motor force which would set this mechanism in motion, and ever ac-

celerate or retard its impetus according to the needs of society.

Now for the creation of the mechanism, the model was at hand. It was an Anglo-Saxon model, evolved by fierce struggles between kings and barons, peoples and lords, armies and peasants, until the government of England stood forth, an example of constitutional centralization and local autonomy. It was the perversion, and not the demolishing of this ideal by a non-English monarch, that had led to the War of Independence. The experiences of the colonies and the vague and ultra-altruistic philosophy of the French school then in vogue, somewhat modified the pattern of English government written into our constitution. But on the whole, that is a purely Anglo-Saxon document.

The only portions of that constitution which have not worked well are those that were invented by the framers. The method, e. g., of electing a president, had to be changed,—and indeed is even now in need of complete revision. So I say, the pattern for the mechanism, the skeleton and muscle part of the body politic was at hand, and well known to the lawyers and statesmen who were members of the notable convention that wrote the constitution.

The vivifying power that must give life to the body, give motion to the machine, was provided by nature, by human nature.

For all government is merely man's device for tempering and harmonizing the instincts and ideals of society. Government is the guiding of human nature into the paths of progress and plenty. So that, given a *form* of government, the inherent tendencies of human nature will give it a certain definite motion. In a democracy, this movement will be freer and easier than in a monarchy, and also more frequent in its changes.

Politically all human nature is divided into two camps, progressive and stationary. By nature, all men are either radical or conservative. Politics is a matter of temperament, of liver and spleen, of secretion and assimilation. So you will always find two great parties in every country, and in every democracy or republic these two great parties will be the motor power of the wheels of government.

The problem of American politics in the nursery days of the Republic, was to harness and bridle those two over-mastering tendencies of human nature. Presidents, senators, courts, ballots, juries, cabinets, states, counties, cities, all were merely like so many wheels, pulleys, belts, and shafts in the great machine of Government. The mystic force that bade these parts move in unison and sway in sympathy with the popular will was the expressed sentiment of the majority. To control and organize that majority is the master-task of statesmen and politicians,

of statesmen, for the sake of the nation, of politicians, for the sake of ulterior private motives.

While thus the pattern of our government was at hand, ready shaped, the application of political sentiment and conviction to the details of government was a novel problem to Americans and absolutely vital to our national existence. The development of American politics, with all of its complex details, has been an evolution from the simpler days of the post-revolutionary period. Every characteristic of present day politics can be traced to a single beginning as the biologist can trace the origin of all life to a single-celled monad.

These devices that characterize our practical politics were designed by men of ingenuity to utilize the natural prejudices and passions of men. To these manipulators, these designers, these leaders, we trace the parentage of every political device, and in the circumstances that surrounded their lives we find the causes that commanded the creation of the device. In the biographies of great politicians and statesmen, then, in the influences that shaped their plans, must we seek the story of the development of American politics.

Personality and principle are the dual nuclei about which have crystalized our great parties. The principles are embodied in the personalities of the leaders. Their



life-story is the story of party politics in America.

New York has been the most fertile garden spot of American politics. There first flourished the machine, the lobby, the spoils system, and there was nurtured the party boss, whose patriotism expanded or contracted with his purse.

In this series of studies of early American party politics we will have to search for origins mainly among the winding labyrinths of factions as they existed in New York after the Revolution. At this time, all men were either Federalists or Anti-Federalists. The new constitution was considered by all of its makers as a temporary makeshift, at most as an experiment. None of them knew how well they had builded. The Federalists espoused its cause with the conciliatory feeling that it ought to have a fair trial. The Anti-Federalists, on the other hand, viewed with alarm the centralized national government. It was this alarm that inspired the savage attacks of George Clinton and Jefferson; and it was this spirit of conciliation and fair-mindedness that inspired the defense of the new constitution. In George Washington this conciliatory spirit found an embodiment, and in Alexander Hamilton a champion. There is a prevalent feeling that Washington had no enemies. This is wholly false. No good and great man ever lived who had not ene-

mies. Nothing in the political controversies of to-day equals the ardor and rancor of the partisans of that primordial time of American politics. Out of the travail of partisanship, of provincialism, of personal hatred; of debates, estrangements and duels; of bickering, intriguing and betraying, was born the party machinery of to-day.

It was still the day of the gentleman. The new nation was a Cis-Atlantic England in costume and custom, economic organizations and political thought. An England tinged with the superficialities of the current French philosophy of Montaigne and Rousseau and Voltaire, as well as tainted with the moralities of Chesterfield and Godwin. Powdered wigs, parti-colored waistcoats, silk hose, and silver shoe buckles were still insignia of rank. The veneer of courtly manners was still indicative of high birth. And the clog, the pantaloon, the close-cropped hair, was the badge of labor and mean birth. Only freeholders were allowed to vote in New York. Universal suffrage was contemplated with a fear that clung through fifty years of agitation.

The Treaty of Paris was signed in 1782. The constitution was written in 1787, and it required two long years of hard labor and illuminating discussion to persuade nine states to adopt it. Washington inaugurated the new government in 1789. This decade between the cessations of war and the be-

ginning of our national government was altogether the most distressing and disheartening period of our history. The struggle was not simply between Federalist and Anti-Federalist. These were but names that shielded multiform foes.

There was first the anti-British feeling of the violent Whigs, who had disfranchised the British sympathizers. These disfranchised citizens were nearly all men of wealth, and therefore latterly drew toward them the well wishes and sympathies of the merchant and land-owning Americans, who were quite all Federalists.

There was secondly the provincial or state feeling. This was positively ridiculous. So petty and unneighborly was this colonial sentiment that Governor Clinton of New York contemplated an impost duty to be levied on articles brought over the Hudson from Jersey and over the state line from Connecticut. Naturally this threatened retaliation, the forerunner of civil war.

Thirdly, there was a great family feeling. How novel this sounds to our ears. Three families ruled New York; three royal families, who guarded their patronage and power with a jealousy that rivaled the manorial feelings of the feudal dynasties of the middle ages. The Livingstones had wealth. The Clintons had offices and votes. The Schuylers had wealth, prestige, and Hamilton, who had married the fair daughter of General

Schuyler. Neither one of these families could rule New York alone. Any two of them united could control the electorate.

Finally there was a feeling of democracy against aristocracy. Business and office were in the hands of the gentility, who treated all others with disdain and often contempt. It was a feeling that was born of blood, and was greatly augmented by the circumstances that placed the Federalists into power. In 1787 the Federalists had bargained with the disfranchised loyalists that they would return to them civil abilities in return for their support in the adoption of the constitution. The deal succeeded, and in 1788 the Democratic party, Anti-Federalists, were thrown out of power by a vote of 7 to 1. The Commons who had tasted the sweets of victory, now chafed at the bitter dregs of defeat.

These antipodal sentiments were given substantial form in two organizations. The Sons of Liberty were bands of patriots who had pledged themselves to the country's glory, over many a sparkling glass. They gathered within their clubs all the anti-English sentiment. They were the Whigs. They attempted to do away with all things that flavored of the English, even wishing to discard the names of the months, as the French Revolutionists did a few decades later.

The Society of the Cincinnati was essentially a federal organization. It comprised

the officers of Washington's army. And many wild rumors were set afloat by the Sons of Liberty as to the sinister notions of the members of this order. They were supposed to have designs on the government, and were to establish hereditary ranks. But these two organizations did not attain any primary political significance. *fake*

The constitution was adopted through the genius and brilliancy of Hamilton. His name was on every tongue, his picture was in every federal household. A magnificent float bearing his name was borne through the streets of New York in celebration of the great event of the adoption of the constitution. His party was victorious at the polls, national and state, and he sat at the council board of the first president, honored and obeyed.

This great victory demolished the organization of the Sons of Liberty. But the spirit of discontent lurked in the hearts of its disorganized members. Federalism to them was aristocracy, and aristocracy reigned. The time was at hand for organizing this discontent into a weapon for wresting the state from the hated champions of centralization and privileged interests. It was the psychological moment. There was needed only a leader, a leader whose genius would rival Hamilton's, whose personality would inspire confidence, and whose courage would dispel fear. Such a one was at hand.



Nature and events had conspired to make Aaron Burr the rival of Hamilton. He was born of a parentage that has potently influenced the course of scholarship in America. His father, the Rev. Aaron Burr, was the distinguished president of Princeton college, and the scion of a Puritan family that had for three generations given to the colonies eminent clergymen, lawyers, and merchants. His mother, Esther Edwards, was the gifted daughter of the most noted scholar of that period, Jonathan Edwards. The brilliant mental talents of these distinguished men were transmitted to Aaron. Unfortunately, their moral sensitiveness and lofty idealism found no lodgment in his soul.

At the age of eleven the precocious boy was ready to enter Princeton. The faculty refused him admission. He was too young. Two years later he entered the sophomore class, and graduated at the age of sixteen. Naturally his family desired him to enter the ministry. His parents had died before he entered college, and the uncle with whom he found a home was unable to manage the self-willed and brilliant youth. But he consented to investigate the theological field before he definitely refused to devote himself to the pursuit of his fathers, and for that purpose entered a private school of theology conducted by Dr. Bellamy. He soon entangled that worthy divine in the meshes of the arguments of French skepti-

cism, then so popular among university students, and left the school disappointed with the theology of his famous grandparent and disgusted with the orthodox formulæ of his tutor.

He chose the law. But before he could open his books the guns of Lexington had called the nation to arms, and Aaron Burr, nineteen years old, enlisted in the continental army. Never was there a better soldier. Had Burr been born in Europe, history might record two Napoleons. Sparse in physique, instinct with motion, Spartan in diet and drink, satisfied with few hours' sleep, and able to sleep under any circumstances, he could endure almost every physical hardship. Alert of mind, he soon mastered all the books on military science; indomitable of will, his discipline was the most severe in all the army; kind in disposition, he was revered by his soldiers. And Aaron Burr never knew fear. His nerves could not twitch. He was confronted by more sudden dangers, and by a greater variety of imminent catastrophies than any other man known to American history, but never did he lose his absolute self-possession. He quelled with his eye and the calmness of his voice. Thus he faced mutinied regiments, ambushed enemies, outraged antagonists, duelling combatants, defrauded creditors, a slandering public, and an enraged nation. In after years, his record as a Rev-



olutionary soldier broke through the clouds that covered his skies like a gleam of welcome sunlight and won for him even the approbation of a congress, whose relentless animosity was akin to bigotry.

He served until, in 1780, he was compelled by broken health, brought on by his over-zealous vigilance in guarding the Westchester lines, to ask for a parole. Washington reluctantly granted leave to his best disciplinarian. Between the commander-in-chief and the young colonel (he had attained the rank when only 21) there was never any mutual love. Neither Burr nor Hamilton thought highly of Washington's ability as a soldier. Burr could not conceal his opinions, but Hamilton's diplomacy cloaked his views, and thus evaded the commander's displeasure, which was several times shown against Burr. He never was promoted to a generalship, and always felt grudgingly against Washington for the partiality displayed toward Hamilton.

For eighteen months Burr was an invalid. As soon as he had gained sufficient strength he attacked the law. He did not read law, he did not study law, he plunged into the library of Judge Patterson at Haverstraw, and in six months mastered the law. The rules prescribed for average mortals are not supposed to apply to genius, and he started for Albany to seek admission to the bar, despite the law that applicants must have

spent three years at study. He found no lawyer to espouse his cause, so he pleaded for himself before the Supreme Court, arguing that had he not devoted himself to his country in her need, he would long since have been admitted. The judges decided to dispense with the rule, if the applicant could pass the examination. The test was made as difficult and intricate as the court could devise, but Burr passed with great honor, and at the age of twenty-six was licensed attorney and admitted as counsellor. He began to practice in Albany, and from the first his success was phenomenal. The old Tory lawyers had all been disbarred by act of the legislature, and brilliant Whig lawyers were much sought.

Within three months from the time of his admission he was married to Theodosia Prevost, the widow of an English general, whom Burr had met some years before, and wooed with winning constancy. She was a woman noted more for her good sense than her beauty, and was charming in intellect rather than bewitching in manner. The home thus founded was one of singular beauty and happiness. The two sons of Mrs. Prevost were at once taken under the guiding care of Burr, who was endowed with all the natural talents of a great teacher. And to his Theodosia, the only child of this fortunate union, he was devoted with a paternal attachment, so sweet and so ennobling that

the annals of poesy and tradition must be searched to find a parallel. In her, he wished to perfect his ideal woman. He directed every detail of her education, and the voluminous correspondence that passed between them reveals how nearly he had succeeded in realizing his purpose.

Soon after his marriage he removed to New York, where for eight years—until 1791—he devoted himself assiduously to his profession. He paid little attention to politics. He had been elected twice to the state legislature, but attended the sessions only when important measures were discussed, and had been appointed attorney general in 1789, but his duties were all in line with his profession. He shared with the more eloquent and profound Hamilton the leadership of the New York bar. [He was a shrewd trial lawyer. He knew the arts of marshaling men and facts. He was adroit, awake, sharp, without sentiment, a martinet. Always tripping, but never tripped. Never gave quarter and never asked. He was not given to words. His address was plain and direct, but always convincing. I cannot find that he ever made a speech over sixty minutes in length. He would follow one of Hamilton's eloquent and masterly arguments with a few remarks, but those so sharpened and so well directed, that the great plea, which swayed judge and jury, would fall disjointed, a mangled mass at his feet.

And in later years, when he stood before the bar accused of treason against his country, he met the gravest crisis of that trial with a speech that occupied ten minutes of time in the delivery.

But we are to turn to the political career of this remarkable man.

Before detailing his life as a politician, let us draw a picture of the man Burr as he was known to his contemporaries. Burr was small of stature, being scarcely five feet six inches in height, and slight of frame. His bearing was erect, the poise of his head was classic. His mouth was very large, nose prominent, ears diminutive, closely clinging to his head, and his forehead, broad at the base, contracted rapidly to a point. This gave his head a most peculiar contour. His eyes were living coals. No human being into whose face they had peered could ever forget their all-searching power. In demeanor quiet, in speech calm, in habits abstemious and regular, never idle a minute, this child of genius was at once beau and student, wit and philosopher, benevolent and heartless. He was totally indifferent to public opinion. Crafty was he beyond all thought, and reckless unto death. He was guided by impulse rather than logic, was fascinating rather than overpowering, and rapid rather than sure. And above all was he fond of intrigue. Mystery seemed the motif of his politics, and he never put

in writing the slightest fragment of a plot, without leaving ample loopholes through which he might escape if discovered.

An overmastering ambition seized this man and drew him headlong into politics. His rise seems miraculous. In four years he lifted himself from private life through the legislature to the United States senate, and into active rivalry with Adams, Jefferson, and Clinton for the succession to Washington. And this when but thirty-six years of age, without affiliating himself with any of the reigning families, nor committing himself fully and irrevocably to either of the two great parties, and without originating or espousing any great cause or measure that would lend character to his campaign for power and glory. This marvelous progress was not due alone to the prestige of his New England ancestry, as John Adams said; nor to mere wire-pulling, as Hamilton wrote; nor to his military reputation, as Jefferson surmised; nor to luck, as the populace cried. It was primarily due to the fact that Aaron Burr was the first American politician who saw the value of compact political organization.

We must now go back to the Sons of Liberty, whom we left utterly demoralized by the victory of Hamilton in 1788. Among the troops of Pennsylvania an organization had sprung up dedicated to a Sagamore Indian Job, a sort of canonized chief called St.

Tammand. The 12th of May was celebrated as his birthday. A great wigwam was erected, a liberty pole raised aloft, and around it danced, in Indian fashion, with tomahawks, feathers and strings of wampum the palefaced braves, wrought up to a high degree of patriotism by generous supplies of firewater. Other St. Tammand societies were organized in other divisions of the army, but their orgies were so frequent and so long enduring that orders were issued forbidding their continuance. But civil Tammany societies were formed in the cities, and in New York St. Tammany survived the days of the army.

William Mooney, an American of Irish descent, had been a leader of "The Sons of Liberty." He was an upholsterer, having establishments successively on Nassau street, Maiden Lane, and Chatham street. He was ignorant, pompous, and fond of display. The former Sons of Liberty gradually came over to Tammany, and Mooney became the first Grand Sachem of the reorganized Society. He had hoped to make Columbus the patron saint, but the Indian celebrations were the most popular part of the ceremonies, and so he compromised on the names, and called it "Tammany Society, or Columbian Order." The organization was entirely anti-English. The officers were: a Great Father, thirteen Sachems, a Sagamore or Master of Ceremonies, a Winkiskee or



Doorkeeper, and a Scribe. At first the society met at Barden's City Hotel on Broadway, next in a public house on Broad street, and finally it found more permanent quarters in "Martling's Long Room," a one-story adjunct to Martling's Tavern. The propensities of these early braves may be imagined from the name popularly given to their meeting place, "pig-pen." Here, after business was done, tradition says, revelry began. The master of ceremonies was usually a jovial and convivial soul, and there was never wanting of song, story and ale. Halleck's familiar quatrain was drawn from observation.

"There's a barrel of porter in Tammany hall,  
And the Bucktails are swigging it all the  
night long,  
In the time of my childhood 'twas pleasant  
to call  
For a seat and cigar 'mid the jovial  
throng."

At this time the Society was ostensibly non-political, though the bulk of the membership was Anti-Federal. Occasionally the 12th of May was made a public holiday, and was celebrated like the Fourth of July. Later, however, a new constitution was adopted, and this gradually transformed the character of Tammany. The ostensible object was still the promulgation of conviviality, the strengthening of the bonds of



brotherhood, and the distribution of charity. In those days there were few social clubs, and Martling's long room became a place of frequent resort.

But Tammany was a secret order, and every member was pledged to maintain the importance of the state, as distinguished from the federal, government. Herein lurked the political serpent that soon was to rise and strike the death-blow to the Federal party. Who contrived this constitution, so artfully blending charity, fellowship and politics? Not Mooney, for he could not. Feathers and paint were his limit. He could arrange showy ceremonies and glow in exultation over a gaudy display of Indian trappings. But he was not astute. He was a tool.

The prevailing opinion of that time, and the evidence of the political events that soon transpired, point to Burr as the real founder of political Tammany. He himself never was a member. This was truly Burrian. He always hid himself under his design, and averted public gaze from his own purposes. But all of his intimate friends and lieutenants were members. They controlled all the tribes, held all the offices, and carried out his secret orders. The ceremony-loving Mooney was his political valet. Burr patronized him in business, in return for his subservience, but his payments were in the form of credits which the upholsterer's executor found impossible to convert into

cash. Burr was by instinct an aristocrat. He was never vulgar, and shrank from the coarse. He could find no pleasure in the rough house at Martling's. But he needed the men. He was a Democrat by design. The mob was to be his pedestal. The Federalists were paying little attention to the poorer freeholders. New York was growing rapidly, and the number of cottage owners was increasing with every influx of immigration. When Hamilton made his shrewd bargain with the loyalists, there were scarce 14,000 freeholders in all the state. This number was doubled by the time Burr was ready to challenge Hamilton to the political fray. And naturally the number of small freeholders increased more rapidly than the rich.

Moreover, Hamilton had an organization in The Cincinnati. True, it was not a political organization, but its membership was overwhelmingly Federal. Burr was a member of The Cincinnati, but not a courted member, as was Hamilton. The brilliant favorite of Washington was its life, its spirit, and its leader. Tradition relates that at its meetings Burr would sit alone and morose, while his rival was surrounded by admiring, worshiping friends. This is probably, like so many traditions about Burr, a cruel exaggeration. But Burr was not popular among any circles in which Hamilton moved. The champion of centraliza-

tion took jealous care that Burr should not shine in his planetary system.

So Burr, deep plotting, laying plans for a decade, organized a counter-contrivance; not that he might be the center of an adoring circle, but that he might have a fulcrum upon which to rest the lever that was to lift Hamilton and the Federalist party out of power forever. Silently and adroitly he gathered together the remnants of the Sons of Liberty, the discontented, the anti-aristocratic, and organized them into a secret band, powerful and perfectly centralized. He cautiously hid the true import of his organization from the public gaze, and under the cloak of charity and fellowship he perfected a political machine, welded together by solemn and secret Anti-Federal obligations. He coined that childish delight which men manifest in display and pomp into political capital; and transmuted paint and feathers into majorities.

To the public, all this while, Burr was not a violent Anti-Federalist. Moderation was the cloak of his intemperance. He worked in unison with Hamilton in 1789 to defeat George Clinton. He labored for many Federal measures when a member of the legislature, and even when Vice-President he cast the deciding ballot for the Federalists on several important occasions. Party lines were not as permanently drawn then as they are now, and many public men turned from one

party to the other. Burr perhaps often did by design, what others did from principle. And remember that Burr never hastened an event by precipitate action. He perfected his Tammany slowly. Mooney was elected first Grand Sachem in 1789. Burr was not ready to use the full power of Tammany until 1800.

Meanwhile, he had risen to a place of national eminence. In 1791 he was elected United States senator. And this over the head of General Philip Schuyler, whose seat he was contesting. The General was the leader of the powerful Schuyler interests; he was the father-in-law of Hamilton, then in the zenith of his glory as Secretary of the Treasury in Washington's cabinet and considered the strongest man in political circles; he was a hero of the Revolution, to which he had contributed wealth and for which he willingly risked his life; he was known throughout the nation. Moreover, the Federalists had a majority in both branches of the legislature, and General Schuyler was the embodiment of dignified Federalism. On the other hand, the youthful Burr had never tampered with national politics, was scarcely known beyond his own state, had not held higher state office than attorney-general, had not wealth, had no vast following, had no claims at all on the Federalists, no special claim on the Republicans. His election has always been considered one of the mysteries of his

strange and adventurous career. The papers of those days are silent as to the causes that conspired in his favor. And the letters of the principals cast little light upon the subject. The vote shows that Burr succeeded in uniting the Clintons and Livingstones against the Schuylers. The Clintons were Anti-Federalists and the Schuylers' jealousy of Hamilton dispelled their Federal predilections. Burr's sole reliance in this unequal contest was upon his personal prowess. The same compelling charm of manner and persuasive voice that a dozen years later bade a rough frontier sheriff, who had entered a house to arrest Burr, to cast aside his weapons and become a willing slave to this fascinating man, now enchanted the legislators and they willingly gave their votes to a young man whose brilliancy would add lustre to the state and whose talents would win fame on any field of action.

Burr's election was a supreme disappointment to Hamilton. From this day forth he sought by all possible means, public and private, to compass the downfall of his successful rival. If he had taken a most solemn oath to destroy Burr he could not more relentlessly and cruelly have pursued him; if fate had marked Burr as the victim of her wrath she could not more unmercifully and more bitterly have multiplied his woe.

The six years of Burr's term in the senate appear to have passed tranquilly enough. His



fertile and active mind fitted naturally into any tasks. He made a brilliant senator, if not a great one. He labored daily without ceasing, from five in the morning until midnight. As a committee worker he had no peer. But he did not originate one great measure. He was not a constructive statesman. His name did not at once conjure up in the popular mind a noble cause, it was not a synonym for a great purpose. He was first a politician, next a lawyer, finally a legislator. He never opened debate, but could most effectively close the discussion, his compact arguments summarizing in masterly manner the merits or faults of the cause.

But underneath this quiet surface were at work two great forces. One was the ambition of Burr and the other the purpose of Hamilton. The ambition of one was the presidential chair, the purpose of the other was the utter annihilation of that ambition: the ambition of one was wholly selfish, the purpose of the other was not untinged by jealousy. Several events will indicate the quiet but powerful flow of these counter-acting forces.

In those days the governorship of New York was one of the great political prizes. Its extensive patronage and opulent salary combined to make it a place of dignity and power, sought by the most distinguished men of the day. George Clinton had held

the position for many terms and was a thorn in the side of the Federalists. In 1792 a plan was set on foot to nominate Burr, hoping thereby to unite the Federalists and the anti-Clinton following among the Republicans. Burr would undoubtedly have carried the state, but Hamilton promptly refused to sanction his nomination and named John Jay for the honor. Clinton was reëlected and offered Burr a place upon the Supreme Bench of the state, which was promptly declined. His eye was fixed upon a more glittering prize.

In 1792 there was some talk of making Burr Vice-President, and he received one vote. Burr himself never took this seriously. His time had not yet arrived. But Hamilton grew alarmed at the prospects and wrote to Rufus King that he felt it "to be a religious duty to oppose his [Burr's] career." Never did man live up to his religious duty with greater ardor. But in the next presidential election Burr received thirty electoral votes, enough to show that his reputation was no longer limited by the boundaries of his state and that his abilities were ranked with those of Jefferson, Thomas Pinckney, Adams, and John Jay. John Adams was elected by a bare majority of three over Thomas Jefferson. The Republican party was making deep inroads into the ranks of the Federalists. Hamilton viewed the result with apprehen-

sion. He seemed to believe that Jefferson was the arch enemy of the Union, and that Burr was an evil genius whose sway would plunge all things into utter ruin. He thoroughly succeeded in convincing Washington that Burr was a wicked, unprincipled, unworthy man.

In 1794 there was a loud clamor for the removal of Gouverneur Morris, the American minister in Paris. A congressional caucus of Republicans recommended Burr for the place, and a committee headed by Madison made known their wish to the President. Washington replied that he had made it a rule of his life never to nominate a man for high office of whose integrity he was not assured. Later, when war with France seemed imminent and Washington was placed in command of the national army, he appointed Hamilton to a high command, but refused to recognize Burr, who was by far the ablest soldier of them all. This antipathy for Burr in the bosom of Washington was the harvest of Hamilton's planting. Even in the farewell address Hamilton wrote for Washington, he took a thrust at Burr's political methods, when he warned his countrymen to avoid secret and sinister political organizations and combinations.

In 1797 the Federalists were again in the ascendant in New York. They finally had succeeded in making John Jay governor. They controlled both branches of the legis-



lature by large majorities, and elected good old General Schuyler to succeed Burr in the senate by an all but unanimous vote. It looked as if Burr's sun had set. Hamilton was short-sighted enough to think so. But before the result of the ballot had been announced, Burr was forming plans for the overthrow of Federalism in the election of 1800. And first he secured his own election to the state legislature. With his powerful machine in New York city this was an easy task. At Albany he was busied in forming the friendship of party leaders from the rural districts. He would dine them, play skilfully upon their unsophisticated minds, and flatter their vanity by requesting that they introduce bills and resolutions he had prepared.

In the session of 1799 he resorted to a trick that reminds one forcibly of the present day methods. At that time the banking business of New York city was monopolized by wealthy Federalists, and Republican merchants often found it difficult to obtain accommodation from them. The yellow fever had ravaged the city the year before, and it was commonly supposed the epidemic was due to impure water. Burr saw his opportunity and introduced a bill chartering "*The Manhattan Company*," ostensibly for the laudable purpose of supplying the city with pure water. The amount of capital necessary could not be definitely fore-

told, so the petitioners prayed for authority to raise two million dollars, thinking it more desirable to contend with a surplus than a deficit. In order to utilize properly a surplus, should they have one, they asked that "the surplus capital might be employed in any way not inconsistent with the laws and constitution of the United States or of the State of New York." This bill Burr introduced at the very end of the session and it was hurried through, the members voting for it without even reading it. Governor Jay signed the bill in spite of admonitions from the Chief Justice of the state that the surplus capital clause was too vague. The waterworks were never built. But the *Manhattan Bank* was at once established, and the Republicans had a financial institution. This bit of duplicity defeated Burr in April of that year for reelection to the legislature. But a greater contest was at hand.

The supreme political struggle in the life of Aaron Burr was the presidential election of 1800. To overthrow the Federalists was the cherished hope of his heart. To share in the fruits of victory, either as president or vice-president, was the shining summit of his ambition. To this end had he labored while in the national senate, winning loyal adherents among the representatives of the southern and western states, for he knew New England would remain Federal beyond

the reach of any Republican. To this end he had organized his city following into a compact secret order. To this end had he gone to the legislature and courted the favor of country members. And now to this end he bent the tremendous energies of his intellect. Four years before the Democrats were within three votes of victory. If New York could be won, then the first Democratic President would enter the new capitol in triumph. What were the prospects? In 1798 the Federalist Jay had been elected by a majority of 2382, a tremendous victory for that time. In 1799 Burr himself was defeated by over 900 majority for the legislature. The Federalists controlled both state and national governments. They were confident and jubilant. Jefferson wrote that he feared the election would be even more unfavorable than in 1796. But Aaron Burr taught the Democratic party how to wrest victory from the jaws of defeat.

First of all, he organized his following. Now we must return to Tammany, the organization which formed the nucleus of the first party discipline in America. Through Tammany, Burr controlled the artisans, the poorer freeholders. His own home became the rendezvous of his most trusted lieutenants, whose hearts were kindled by the fire of his own zeal.

In the second place he selected a not-

able list of candidates for the legislature. The audacity and sagacity displayed in his choice and the skill and rare tact required to persuade them to accept, dazzled even his friends. All the antagonizing elements must be brought together in harmony on the face of a single ticket. Burr, of course, must be in the legislature, for at this time the legislators selected the presidential electors. But his Manhattan escapade had made him enemies. So he became a candidate from Orange county, where he was very popular.

In the city he chose George Clinton to head the ticket. Himself an aspirant for the presidency who had received fifty electoral votes out of 132, in 1793, when Jefferson had only four, and not a friend of Jefferson, should he now become an aid to his promotion? He was an old man, who had been in the public eye for nearly half a century, a big, honest, strong-willed Irishman. For three days he resisted the attacks of Burr, of committees, of sub-committees. Finally Burr said that in a crisis it is for the people to demand service, and that he would be nominated anyway. The old war horse stubbornly conceded not publicly to withdraw his name.

Second in the list stood General Gates, the gallant conqueror of Burgoyne, a stanch adherent of Burr, and an antagonist of Hamilton and the Schuylers. Yet his aver-

sion to running for the legislature was greater than his hatred for the Schuylers and his love for Burr. Artful and importunate were the entreaties that the brilliant politician poured into the ears of his old commander, who finally said that he would remain on the ticket if Clinton would.

Third on this remarkable list stood Brockholst Livingstone, a gifted member of that influential tribe that now had fully identified itself with the Republican party. He proved a little more tractable, and promised to accept the nomination on condition that Gates and Clinton did.

The other nine men were comparatively easy of conquest. They were all men of ability, chosen for their influence over various groups. I do not believe that a stronger legislative ticket was ever placed before any electorate. And no one but Burr could have conceived such a list, and talents less captivating than his would have failed in persuading the men to stand.

A great mass meeting was next called to ratify this remarkable ticket, and the public campaign moved rapidly forward under the personal guidance and inspiration of the irrepressible Burr. Ward meetings, precinct meetings, enormous mass meetings, were inflamed by the passion of his speech. What is probably the first poll list made in an American campaign was prepared by his lieutenants, and every voter in the city was

169  
245

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+ recorded in these lists, together with his politics, his zeal, his temperament, health, habits, and his vulnerable points.

+ Tammany was the beehive of this busy scene. Men were brought into the wigwam by scores, and initiated into the order. Social, political, financial, and all other species of persuasion were used to compel the reluctant to take the oath. The unstable were escorted to the polls, and their ballot jealously guarded. From grand sachem to brave there was not an idle tongue and indolent hand in the wigwam of the potent Sagamore.

In those days elections were not the affair of a day. There was no registering, no complicated ballot with its bewildering list of names. The voter simply walked to the box and dropped his simple ballot. The election occupied three days, and they were days of excitement, of haranguing, of drinking, of betting, and I fear, often of personal encounter. Hamilton's eloquence flowed continuously for the three days of this notable election, and while he held the masses under the spell of his voice, Burr was hurrying everywhere, garnering the votes. The counting of the ballot showed forth the success of Burr's methods, and proclaimed to the nation that its first political revolution had taken place. For not only did the Republicans carry the city, but also the state, and from that day forth it has been almost uniformly true, "as goes New York so goes the country."



I said this was a political revolution. It placed the Republican party in power. At this day we can have no conception of what that meant to the Federalists. To them Jeffersonianism was Jacobinism, was atheism, was anarchism, was annihilation. The New England papers were filled with dismal forebodings and even contemplated the dissolution of the Union. And yet these New England Federalists had provided their antagonists with a great issue, the Alien and Sedition laws, deservedly unpopular everywhere. Hamilton was stupefied. He wrote to Bayard of Delaware that Burr's Tammany Society was the cause of the Federalist defeat in the city, and Burr's activity the source of the Republican strength in the counties. He even recommended that the Federalists organize a like machine, without the adjunct of aboriginal ceremony.

All eyes now turned toward Jefferson. It should be remembered that in those years the presidential electors were chosen by the various state legislatures, and not all upon the same day; that there was no general nomination of any one man for the high office, but that each elector was left free to vote as he chose. It was conceded by all that Jefferson was the choice of the people. Would he be the choice of the electors? The result was not known until the middle of December. It was disappointing to the Republicans, and startling to the Federalists.



Jefferson and Burr each received 73 votes, Adams 65, Pinckney 64, and Jay 1. There was a tie. The electors had not made a choice. The House of Representatives must decide for them.

All eyes were now turned toward Aaron Burr. Would he subvert the popular will and intrigue with the Federalists to place himself at the head of the government? Or would he actively engage his remarkable political talents in behalf of Jefferson? The great majority of his contemporaries, and of historians, believe the former. Not even his friends concede the latter. I believe that such evidence as can be gathered proves that he did neither.

He did intrigue, before the election, to become the candidate for Vice-President. In May, 1800, an informal caucus of Republicans was held in Philadelphia, wherein it was determined to give New York the vice-presidency, Jefferson being the only man contemplated for the presidency. For the second place, Chancellor Livingstone, Governor Clinton, and Aaron Burr were mentioned. Albert Gallatin was asked to sound these men. He wrote to Commodore Nicholson, of New York, requesting him to see them, and to converse freely with party leaders to determine their availability.

Livingstone was old and deaf, and therefore dropped at once. Clinton was the popular choice, but he maintained that advanced

age, ill health and family contingencies all combined to disincline him toward the place. He really thought himself entitled to the first place in the Anti-Federal ranks. Nicholson insisted that the welfare of the party demanded his acceptance of the nomination, and Clinton reluctantly yielded. Nicholson was so favorably impressed that he wrote a letter to the Philadelphia caucus, recommending Clinton. But he showed this letter to Burr before it was posted, and when the seal was finally put on the envelope, the name of Clinton had been erased, and that of Aaron Burr written in its place. What wiles did the crafty Burr use in persuading the old commodore? During the excitement of the following winter, when the whole nation was at a white heat, and when one word from Burr would have restored sanity to a crazed people, it must have occurred to Nicholson that the fate of the young republic seemed to depend upon that erasure.

That Burr, however, designed to defeat Jefferson after the voice of the people had spoken so clearly, is mere conjecture. If he did so intend, he succeeded in completely hiding all evidences. The Republicans had bungled in the arranging of the electoral vote. They could easily have avoided the tie, by dropping one vote from Burr. This was contemplated by the Virginia delegation, but a report that New York would do



the same thing, induced them to abandon the plan. Did Burr start this report? There is no such evidence. Did Burr confuse the Republican leaders into this blunder? Prejudice, and not evidence, answers yes.

The Federalists of New England preferred Burr to Jefferson. Their papers, their letters, their pamphlets, all are frank in this avowal. The "*Boston Sentinel*" says: "The Federal states in Congress will give Mr. Burr their suffrages. Mr. Burr has never yet been charged with writing libelous letters against the government of his country to foreigners, and his politics always have been open and undisguised. It is granted he is ambitious, but he is no hypocrite, and though he is like Bonaparte in some respects, he possesses none of the cold-hearted qualities of the Gallic Consul."

This was the prevailing New England sentiment. Had the house of representatives convened in December, 1800, to choose a president, the New England Federalists would have given their support to Burr. What influence overcame their predilections? There was only one power in the Federal party potent enough to avert the elevation of Burr over Jefferson. It was the power of Hamilton. The genius of that gifted man was now applied to the single object of keeping his hated rival out of the presidential chair. He first tried to steal the electoral vote of New York by having Governor Jay call an

extra session of the legislature and pass a bill that should provide that the presidential electors be appointed by districts and not by the newly - elected legislature. Governor Jay refused to be a party to such a scheme. Two years before Burr had tried to inaugurate a similar method of choosing the electors, and had been roundly denounced for this partisan trickery.

Hamilton now turned to his personal friends in the party. He wrote, expostulated, argued, pleaded. To all he pictured Burr as without principle, profligate, selfish; a Cæsar, a Catiline, a Bonaparte whose election would disgrace the country, if not hurl it to ruin. A perusal of Hamilton's letters reveals the skill with which he adapted his arts to the various individuals he desired to sway, and leaves one wondering how much the spirit of jealousy prompted his patriotism.

As the day for the election in the House of Representatives neared, the excitement increased. The House consisted of 106 members, the majority of whom were Federalists. Of the sixteen states in the Union, it was necessary to secure a majority for election. This federal house was limited in its choice to an Anti-Federal candidate. How strange this sounds to our ears! We can hardly conceive a Republican house electing a Democratic president. The constitution then prescribed that the choice

should be restricted to the two receiving the highest number of electoral votes. If only a majority of the members had sufficed Burr would have been chosen on the first ballot. But he could not secure a majority of the states. The House, before beginning to ballot, resolved not to adjourn until an election had been effected. After taking 29 ballots, they eluded this resolution by taking a recess. Every member was present. Some sick members were cared for on sofas, and one member was so seriously ill that he was attended by his wife. The balloting was done behind closed doors. After seven days of voting, Bayard, of Delaware, cast the vote of his state for Jefferson, and thus terminated one of the most memorable contests for the presidency in our country's history.

Throughout this exciting period, Burr bore himself with the dignity and poise that became a candidate for the high office of Vice-President. He spent his days at Albany as a member of the legislature, or in New York attending to his practice. His friends, it is true, were busy in his behalf among the Federalist members of the House. How far they carried their electioneering, and to what extent Burr encouraged them, will probably always remain one of the secrets of our history. The vituperative partisan accounts published by Cheetham and other of his bitterest enemies, cannot be relied upon as sources. They reveal only



souls surcharged with the gall of hate. Their vital sentences all begin with "It is said," or "It is reported," or "They relate." Nothing authoritative is found in all their rancorous literature.

Burr might easily have secured the election had he put forth personal effort, and given even an equivocal renunciation of Republicanism. Judge Cooper, father of the novelist, and a Federal member of the House, wrote to Thomas Morris on the third day of the balloting: "Had Burr done anything for himself, he would long ere this have been President. If a majority would answer, he would have it on every vote." Bayard, whose course decided the election, wrote Hamilton: "The means existed of electing Burr, but this required his coöperation. By deceiving one man (a great blockhead) and tempting two (not incorruptible), he might have secured a majority of the states."

Burr did not make the requisite movement to secure these votes. He remained utterly passive.

Nor did his spirit require him to exert himself in behalf of a man for whose talents he had little admiration, and whose sentimentalism he detested. For Burr had never loved Jefferson. He now did not feel called to aid his election. He kept himself entirely aloof from the contest. He pursued the attitude of a man who would accept the presidency if elected, but would not

as much as raise a finger, either in his own behalf, or in behalf of his rival.

Brave as a soldier, brilliant as a lawyer, unrivaled as a politician, he was now in the zenith of his splendor. Had his feet rested upon the firm foundation of a great cause, or noble character, the clouds that now gathered rapidly about him would not have obscured his glory. But his station had been reached by the arts of the politician. Design, not greatness of purpose, had won him power. He could organize and inspire a machine, but he could not dazzle the multitude. Since the death of his wife, in 1794, he became as careless of his morals as he was profligate of his money. There is a time in the career of every public man when he must rely on something far greater than political device for his power over the people. Alas for Burr, he lacked this one thing! The people would not rally to his support when the plotters of his party turned their arts against him.

A better presiding officer never guided the routine of the Senate. He was impartial and immediate in his rulings, dignified and prompt in demeanor, and non-partisan when he held the casting vote. He was a very popular man in the capital, and was feted as the general who had led his party to its first national victory. But he was in Jefferson's way. The Vice-Presidency was



regarded as a stepping-stone to the Presidency. The Virginia dynasty had selected Madison, secretary of state, as the successor to Jefferson. All the power of the Federal patronage was used against Burr. In New York where he should have been consulted in the distribution of offices, he was given only a few petty places. The Livingstones and Clintons were loaded with appointments. Republican papers began to grow lukewarm toward Burr. The "*American Citizen*," Republican organ of New York, edited by Cheetham, an unscrupulous Englishman, savagely attacked him because of his imagined intrigues with the Federalists. The "*Evening Post*," founded by Hamilton and edited by the able William Coleman, attacked him because of his political methods, and characterized his followers as a "band of desperate and unsound citizens." His own organ, the "*Morning Chronicle*," founded in 1802 and edited by Peter Irving, a brother of Washington Irving, who was a contributor to its columns, could hardly neutralize the acid of these attacks.

Thus the coldness of Jefferson was diverting Republican sentiment from Burr, and the unabating efforts of Hamilton were alienating the Federalists who had regarded him with so much favor. Even to a genius with the resource of an overshadowing issue, such a dual attack must be fatal.

The years of his Vice-Presidency were

passed amid such political ferment. Burr made it a rule of his life never to answer a charge or to heed a calumny. He paid apparently no attention to the newspapers. They did not disturb his serenity by day nor his repose by night. But his friends, of whom he had many, loyal and true, could not sit idly by while their chief was being slandered. They hotly answered the attacks. The details of this war of epithets and personalities are disgusting. I pass them by without illustration or comment. But while Burr appeared indifferent to their disgraceful libels and to the conspiracies of Jefferson, he was far from blind as to their results. He foresaw that he could not hope for the undivided support of his party in the coming presidential campaign. In January, 1804, he had a long conference with Jefferson, and frankly avowed that it would be for the interests of the party and would avert a schism if he would retire from the contest. The President gave him no other encouragement than to assure him that he never allowed any one to converse with him on the subject of candidates. He wished to leave that entirely with the people; and all the while he was conspiring to put Madison in Burr's place! In commenting on this conference in his diary, Jefferson says that Burr's conduct "inspired me with distrust. I habitually cautioned Mr. Madison against trusting him too much."

Burr's hope for further political promotion now reposed in the arms of the people of his own state. To them he determined to appeal. Could he be chosen governor of New York his prestige as the leader of his party would be unquestioned, and he would come forth the rival of Jefferson and the peer of Madison. A legislative caucus, held in the Tontine Coffee House, nominated him for the place. This choice was subsequently ratified by great meetings held in New York and Albany.

The Federalists were now scarcely a party in New York. They could not hope to carry an election, except by unitedly supporting some other candidate. The Clintonians named Morgan Lewis as their candidate, a man of mediocre talents and a violent partisan, who was not altogether acceptable to the Federalists. Yet to Hamilton there was no choice. The passion of his life was to defeat Burr. Hamilton went to Albany for a conference with his party associates. The meeting was held in Lewis's Tavern and was supposed to be secret. But several Burrrites hid in an adjoining bedroom and spied out what transpired. The next day the "*Morning Chronicle*" said: "Last night the leading Federal gentlemen of this place had a meeting at the city tavern. General Hamilton addressed the meeting with his usual eloquence. The principal part of his speech went to show that no reliance can be placed on Mr. Burr."

The contest was not one of parties but of factions, and factional wrath is far more vituperative than partisan zeal. Burr's following were held, by their chief, well within the precincts of decorum. But the Clintonians were fire-eaters. Their brands were fed with the oil of Federalism. Cheetham especially reveled in libel and gorged his spleen in handbills and pamphlets whose lies were equalled only by their vulgarity. Heroic were the efforts of Tammany to wring victory from the powerful coalition of its enemies. But it was in vain. While Burr carried the city, the state gave Lewis 35,000 votes, against 28,000 for the Vice-President.

There is a prevalent feeling that Burr was intent upon severing the union, and by becoming governor of New York planned to elevate himself to the Presidency of a northern republic composed of the New England and North Atlantic States. The persistence of this opinion reveals the ease with which human nature is misled and how unfair history may become. The only foundation for such a slander is the wicked imagination of the unprincipled Cheetham and the zealous partisanship of Hamilton. Even if Burr had been traitorously minded, he was too wise a man to be deluded into such vagaries.

Rapid had been Burr's ascent toward the summit of political achievement, thrice

rapid was his decline. The storm-clouds that for three years had been gathering about his head burst with a sudden fury. If Burr had been content to bide his time, he would not have ventured into the struggle for governor but would have allowed the opposition to subside. Even after his defeat in New York, had he retired to his law practice, he would in the course of time have been restored to public favor. But his spirit was restless. He was not the man to submit to defeat without a struggle. He realized that of the elements that contributed to his overthrow, none was less excusable and more purely personal than the relentless antagonism of Hamilton that had pursued him for ten years like a death winging shadow. He had paid little attention to this, but six weeks after the election proofs were placed in his hands of unwarranted personal attacks upon his character. He wrote to Hamilton asking for explanations. The correspondence that ensued culminated in the duel that deprived Hamilton of his life and Burr of his honor.

The details of this lamentable encounter do not concern us here. Both principals made careful preparation and wrote their wills. Hamilton spent the night before the duel in restless writing; Burr slept. Hamilton crossed the Hudson determined to throw away his first fire; Burr mounted the narrow ledge under the Heights of Weehawken,



fully determined not to waste one bullet. That bullet entered Hamilton's breast, and it had been well for Burr if the ball that broke the twig far above his head had found lodgment in his heart. Hamilton died the following day, after heartrending farewells to his wife and seven children; Burr hid in his mansion on Richmond Hill. Hamilton was borne to his grave mourned by the nation; Burr fled the city of his triumphs, a fugitive from justice. The people gathered at every meeting place to eulogize the character of Hamilton; two grand juries met to indict Burr of murder. Hamilton was canonized a political saint; Burr was condemned as a political satan. Every simple trait of Hamilton was glorified into a virtue, and every virtue sanctified into divinity; every foible of Burr was transmuted into a vice, and every folly developed into fiendish wickedness. The frailties of Hamilton were enwrapped in his shroud; the shining qualities of Burr were tarnished by slander and bigotry.

Strange and inexplicable as was this universal outburst of laudation and condemnation, far more mysterious is the fact that the hot judgment of those days has not been cooled by one hundred years of history; and that the sentiments of the Federal parsons who preached in every hamlet their eulogistic panegyrics of Hamilton have remained the prevalent sentiment of to-day. Hamilton

is still the hero, Burr the villain of that lamentable tragedy.

Not that society condemned the duel. It was one of the remnants of the gentleman's day that clung to the customs of the hour, as did small-clothes and wigs. Few notable men of the time had escaped encounters and still fewer had eluded challenges. Even at a later day duels were fought by Randolph, Clay, Benton, Jackson, and Decatur. Walpole, Wellington, Peel, Grattan, Sheridan, Jeffry, D'Israeli, all met upon the "field of honor." The vituperation of the Clintonians and their foul mouthpiece, Cheetham; the anger of the Federalists and the personal bitterness of Jefferson united in overpowering this brilliant daring and alas, conscienceless man. For if ever there was cause for a political duel, Burr, indeed, was justified in the challenge. That he was justified in the cold-blooded execution of the design, who shall say?

And what of his immediate following? Was Tammany accessory before the fact? Two sachems, Mathew L. Davis and William P. Van Ness, were with Burr at Weehawken, one of them as his second. Another sachem, John Swartout, was at Burr's house waiting his return. Other members were disposed at different points to learn the news. Tammany secretly rejoiced at the fall of their unrelenting foe. The night of Hamilton's death, Martling's Long Room was the scene



of a disgraceful revel, and toasts were drunk to the chieftain who had slain their bitterest enemy. But on the following morning, Tammany prudently bowed to public opinion and put on a hypocritical coat of mourning. The following item appeared in the New York papers:

“Brothers, your attendance is earnestly requested at an extra meeting of the tribes in the Great Wigwam, precisely at the setting of the sun this evening, to make arrangements for joining our fellow-citizens and soldiers in a procession, in order to pay the last tribute of national respect due to the manes of our departed fellow-citizen, General Alexander Hamilton. By order of the Grand Sachem.

“JAMES B. BRISST, Secy.

“Season of Fruits, in the year of discovery Three Hundred and Twelve, and of the Institution the Fifteenth.”

The way the news of the fatal duel was received by the public was a complete surprise to Burr. I select two newspaper items of that date to show the prevailing feeling in both parties. The “*Columbia Sentinel and Massachusetts Federalist*,” heavily in mourning, said: “Yesterday, before and after General Hamilton’s death, Colonel Burr was seen riding about the streets, his servants behind, with as much apparent cheerfulness and unconcern as if nothing

had happened, or as if he had performed a meritorious action *instead of having committed murder.*" "*The Independent Chronicle,*" a Republican paper of Boston, showed no heavy lines of mourning and did not contain a notice of the duel until July 23d, twelve days after the event occurred, when it announced: "When the partial fervor of the moment has subsided we shall endeavor to present to the public such a brief commentary upon the life and political character of General Hamilton *as may be proper for a philanthropist to write and a Republican to peruse.*" Wild rumors were afloat that Burr had decided to kill five other of his opponents.

When he learned that the grand juries of New Jersey and New York were about to indict him, he fled to Philadelphia where he had an affair of the heart. Never for a moment did he lose his self-composure, never did he think of explaining his act. To his own self was he justified in killing his rival, and to Aaron Burr, Aaron Burr was all-sufficient. To his daughter, now happily married and living in South Carolina, he writes from Philadelphia: "If any male friend of yours should be dying of ennui, recommend him to engage in a courtship and a duel at the same time." He sought his way down the coast to South Carolina, where he spent ten blissful days with his Theodosia. In the South his

journey was a triumphal progress. Federalism had not penetrated the warmer states. At Washington he was received with marked attentions. In response to a toast, said one senator: "The first duel I ever read of was that of David killing Goliath. Our little David of the Republican party has killed the Goliath of Federalism, and for this I am willing to reward him."

Burr had yet to preside over one session of the Senate. So dignified and noble was his demeanor, so carefully did he sustain himself, that even the breath of suspicion could find no fault. Toward the end of the session he spoke his farewell to his colleagues. Whatever emotions may have been burning within his soul, his complete composure concealed them. But so fervent and impressive was his language, and so lofty his sentiments, that his auditors were entranced, and many a staid senator found tears stealing into his eyes. This was his power over the intellect and the emotions.

But New England and New York would neither forgive nor forget. The one was too Puritanic, the other too partisan. Burr saw that he must allow the fever to subside ere he could return to his home. He writes: "In New York I am to be disfranchised, in New Jersey hanged. Having substantial objections to both, I shall not for the present hazard either, but shall seek another country."

Let us rapidly follow this unfortunate

man through the melancholy sequel of his life. His political career ends here. Burr's judgment fled with the life of Hamilton. He now becomes an adventurer. He seeks the throne of Mexico. Reckless talking and foolish cipher messages involve him in a trial for treason. Jefferson pursues him even after two juries have acquitted him and the populace of the Mississippi Valley have received him with loud acclaim. If Jefferson cannot reach his foe by legal process, he will have him by military force. Through the dismal swamps and uninhabited forests of the southern states he is dragged, a prisoner of war in time of peace, to Richmond, there to be tried for high treason. His designs on Mexico, then a Spanish province, are interpreted as idle attempts to split the union, and unite Louisiana with Mexico to form one great nation. The trial is memorable in the annals of our public law. The most brilliant talent at the bar contends before the greatest judge of our history for the innocence of the greatest politician of his day. What a scene, John Marshall sitting on the bench to try Aaron Burr for treason against the country whose favors had placed him all but on the pinnacle of political glory! Society, ever won by his captivating manner and brilliant conversation, flocked to his prison home to lighten his hours. His Theodosia was at his side to minister to his comforts. He conducted his own defense. In

a court of law he was at home. The state's witnesses could not testify to an overt act. The pompous, hypocritical and arrogant General Wilkinson, whose testimony was to send Burr to the gallows, could prove nothing except his own implication in the designs upon Mexico. There was an acquittal.

There was one attempt to restore him to power. In 1810 the "Burrites," as the Tammany men were now called, were approached by the Clintonians and asked their terms of peace and union. The first condition was that Colonel Burr should be recognized by the union party as a Republican and allowed to return to favor. The Clintonians promised, and it appeared for a time as though Burr might be restored to power. A dinner was given at Dyde's Tavern to consummate the union. A toast in honor of Aaron Burr was drunk in the following words: "Aaron Burr, late Vice-President of the United States, dignified in the chair, prompt in the cabinet, gallant in the field. May his country duly appreciate his talents and his services." Six cheers were moved for Burr, followed by nine cheers for Clinton. A participant in this celebration said: "By this time we felt prepared to drink forgiveness to everything human, whether savage, sage or Turk." But this dinner and its liberal flow of wine produced no peace. A great mass meeting of Clintonians was called. It was attended by thousands of turbulent



and angry men, who resolved that union was inconsistent, and "that Aaron Burr does not and ought not to possess the confidence of the Republican party." This was the final attempt of the "Martling Men" to bring their chieftain back to power. But they never ceased to harass Clinton, whom they always believed the instigator of the Anti-Burr faction in the Republican party.

After the trial, Burr, disguised and under an assumed name, fled to Europe. At the courts of the old world he sought aid in his scheme to conquer Mexico. Four years he sojourned on the continent. At every capital he was received with delight. His resplendent talents were meant to shine in court, and his companionship was sought by the greatest scholars of Europe. Jeremy Bentham became his intimate friend.

In England a project was put in motion to provide a seat for Burr in the House of Commons. But the antagonism of Jefferson pursued him across the wide ocean, and instead of a seat in the Commons, the English government politely informed him that his absence from England would be appreciated. Wherever he encountered Americans there he was snubbed. Europe was now in the throes of the Napoleonic wars, and it was very difficult to secure passports. But no minister or consul of his native land would offer him friendly service. Jefferson's and Madison's appointees took care to ignore the



one man whose political manipulations had placed their president in power.

England, Sweden, Holland, Germany and France were visited by the wandering exile. For his brilliant mind, winning manners and compelling personality there was universal admiration and wonderment. But for his scheme of empire there was not one word of encouragement. Four years he continued his futile search. His reckless extravagance and profligacy in money matters reduced him many times to penury. In London his cash dwindled to two half-pence, which, he says, are better than one pence, "for you can hear them jingle." Often he is compelled to seek the meanest lodgings, and to go hungry. But his resources were usually equal to his extravagances. He always found means to borrow money from admiring friends. I cannot find that he returned very many of these friendly loans. Withal, in the midst of these cares, pursued by his government, avoided by his countrymen, threatened by want, he found time for the little love intrigues of which he grew so fond in later life. In Paris and Weimar, especially, were his captivating manners the center of feminine adoration, an adoration to which he joyously responded.

The last year of his sojourn in Europe was one continued effort to secure passage to America. In Paris he was virtually a prisoner of state. Finally he succeeded in find-

ing a ship and raising the passage money. But what was his consternation when the vessel was taken by a British privateer and towed to Yarmouth as a prize. Without funds, he hastened to London. Only Aaron Burr could have survived the struggle with misfortune that now ensued. Every scheme and device for raising money failed. His fair friends were ever active in his behalf, but their influence could at most only supply his daily wants. After most humiliating attempts he secured passage and started for the land whence he had fled a fugitive, and to which he returned an exile.

Throughout these years he never lost his marvelous power of self-reliance. Not one moment did his purpose waver. His diary and numerous letters reveal a cheerful, energetic and busy personality. There is no resentment manifested toward his enemies. Dignified and indifferent he is, alike to the calumnies of his countrymen and the privations of poverty. Occasionally he thinks of his native land. Once he writes: "Alas, the country which I am so anxious to revisit will perhaps reject me with horror."

His country did not expel him. The indictments that hung over his name were nolleed soon after his arrival, and he was allowed to remain in New York, to which city he had returned in disguise, and where he remained in hiding until assured that all legal prosecutions would be abandoned. Then

he determined to begin life anew, at the age of 56. A little tin sign bearing the legend, "Aaron Burr, Attorney and Counsellor-at-Law," was nailed over a door on Nassau street, and the following card was published in the papers: "Aaron Burr has returned to the city and has resumed the practice of law." His old popularity seemed at once to return. The day that his presence was made known, he received over five hundred gentlemen callers. Before two weeks passed he had received over two thousand dollars in retainers, a large sum for those days.

But fate had still in reserve her deadliest weapons. One month after his arrival, Theodosia writes of the death of her only child, a boy of eleven years, whose life was the rising star of his grandparent's hope. The blow was terrible. But Burr repressed his emotion, in his effort to console the mother. But Theodosia could not be consoled. She grew gradually weaker, and longed to be with her father. Burr sent a physician to Charleston, to accompany her to New York. The party embarked in a small schooner, "*The Patriot*." Six days at most should have sufficed for the passage. Six days passed, and no tidings; two weeks passed, and no news. The "*Patriot*" was never heard from again. Tales of her capture by pirates, of the mutiny of her crew, of her foundering in a gale, were brought to the father's ears. The agonizing suspense

of these days of waiting wrung from Burr's heart the only tears he was ever known to shed. This was his supreme grief. He said: "When I realized the truth of her death, the world became a blank to me, and life then lost its value." And to his son-in-law he wrote that he was now "severed from the human race."

It was Burr's philosophy to "accept the inevitable without repining." He resolved in youth always to be cheerful. While he put aside all external things that suggested Theodosia, and bore with his accustomed grace and cheerfulness this profoundest affliction, the death of his daughter robbed him of his incentive to restore himself to power and to regain a fortune. With the life of Theodosia, perished the father's ambition.

The twenty-four years that remained for him to live were passed in obscurity. His law practice was sufficient to keep him in comfort, but he was not retained for great cases. Prejudice and slander passed into tradition, and when he was an old man of seventy-five years, the children and grandchildren of his rivals peered at him in fear out of the corners of their eyes, and whispered of the terrible deeds the little, bent, wrinkled old man had committed in the days of his youth. And the gossips of the town were kept busy exaggerating his love intrigues. He never was free from debt. His recklessness with money increased with age. One by one the

loyal companions of his youth passed away, until he was left quite alone. But the wonderful fire of his eye never dimmed, and the compelling charm of his conversation never abated, and the stately poise and self-possession of his demeanor never vanished, until the only enemy that could conquer Aaron Burr triumphed. His last feeble hours were passed in the care of a lady whose father he had befriended in the days of his power. The silent angel never carried into the bosom of immortality a more indomitable soul, and never ended a more eventful and sad career. For who can reflect upon the fate of Aaron Burr without a feeling of fear, of awe, and of pity?

Late in life Burr confessed: "Had I read Sterne more than Voltaire, I might have thought the world large enough for Hamilton and myself." How profoundly would this training in morals have affected the history of American politics!

DE WITT CLINTON

FATHER OF THE SPOILS SYSTEM









## DE WITT CLINTON

### FATHER OF THE SPOILS SYSTEM

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THE year after the Declaration of Independence had been signed and sent on its quickening journey through the colonies, New York adopted its first constitution, a document prepared by John Jay, with the approval of Alexander Hamilton, Richard Morris, Robert Livingstone, John Lansing, Peter Vandervoort, Phillip VanCortland, and a host of other notable men, in convention assembled. The Federal and Democratic elements were unnaturally blended in two of its provisions. One anomaly directed that all laws be approved by a Council of Revision composed of the Governor, the Chancellor, and the judges of the Supreme Court. The second anomaly was a monstrosity in the shape of a Council of Appointment. The state was divided into four senatorial districts—southern, middle, eastern, and western. Every year the assembly nominated one senator from each district to serve with the Governor as a member of this Council. The words of the constitution seemed to give the appointing power to the Governor, for he was required, with the advice and consent of the council, to appoint all officers.

Strangely, this clause caused no trouble until its author, the erudite John Jay, was elected governor. His Council was not in political accord with him. The Council claimed the appointing power, saying the governor has a vote only when there was a tie. Subsequently a convention was called to fix an interpretation upon this clause, and the verdict was against the sole power of the Governor. We would to-day regard with alarm the suggestion that a convention and not a supreme court should determine the import of a state constitution.

This Council was then all powerful: the Governor was merely a chairman. It selected all civil and military officers of the state, the heads of departments, except the state treasurer, the Chancellor, the judges of the supreme and inferior courts, all justices of the peace, and even the auctioneers. Its arm reached into every county, every township; its hands rested upon every branch of the civil and military service. Not in the annals of our public law is there found another example of such centralization of the appointing power.

Surely the authors of this provision did not foresee the course that American politics would take, and that within this innocent looking clause lurked the spirit of partisanship that guided the politicians of the Empire State into the wilderness of faction and party strife for more than fifty

years, and exerted a corrupting influence over national politics that has even after a century of struggle been scarcely abated.

This council of appointment was the opportunity of the politician. That it was not designed as such is evidenced by the character of the men who framed its structure, and by the fact that for twenty-five years the course of appointments seems to have run smoothly enough. It is true that those were years pregnant with great events, with the gaining of national independence, the choosing of a form of government, the establishing of a nation; great events that buried deep the petty animosities of pygmy politicians and faction venders, great events that held aloft before the people great ideals of office, and forbade that public trusts should be traduced into private lusts.

Thus it transpired that not until after the great political revolution that opened the new century did a man appear whose training taught him the value of office as a means of political power, whose ambition willingly grasped the needs of the state as a means of elevating himself into high place, and whose genius could seize this opportunity and wield it to his own glory.

Good old George Clinton was for eighteen years governor of New York. A man was he of courage and of character. Nature had housed, within a great body of marvelous vitality, a great soul of wondrous depth and



a great mind of overcoming power. For George Clinton to will, was for him to do. He was as ardent in the execution of his purpose as he was tenacious of his convictions. Once his mind was fixed, it could be bent neither by logic nor by circumstances. He was by nature an Anti-Federalist, and came near wrecking the new federal constitution upon the rocks of his Irish perversity. But when adopted by the people, the constitution was to him his creed of patriotism, and he was as energetic in its defense as he had been active in his opposition. This sturdy character had wrested his power from the reigning families by sheer force of intellect and will. He was the friend of the people and the ally of the weak. His ideals of public office were lofty, and the tricks of the politician found little favor in his sight. He never throughout his long career as an executive dismissed one man from office without a just cause.

And quiet, gentle John Jay, who was the first Federalist governor of New York, a scholar, diplomat, jurist, could no more juggle with the wiles of political intrigue than could a cooing dove assume the rôle of a plundering hawk. Under these two governors the council did its work fairly well. Its appointments were not always above criticism, but it was not flagrantly used for partisan purposes until the advent of a sharp, political manipulator, the Mephistopheles of the young democracy.

While Aaron Burr was perfecting his machine in New York city, DeWitt Clinton was completing his course at Columbia College, and was serving his political apprenticeship as secretary of his renowned uncle, George Clinton. At college young Clinton won praise as a scholar, his instructors publicly announcing their belief that he would win renown in the greater endeavors of life. The stirring events of the Revolution were woven into boyhood romance for him, and the subsequent struggle for national existence formed the livid background of his early manhood. His very college experience seemed to heighten the color of revolutionary changes, for King's College was transformed into Columbia College. The loyalist president of King's College had been ignominiously driven from his home, fleeing through a back window from the mob that clamored at his front door, and after the evacuating of New York by the British, a new president gathered about him a new faculty, and DeWitt Clinton was the first matriculate of the new-born Columbia.

In 1788 he was admitted to the bar, and the same year reported the debates of the state convention called to consider the adoption of the United States constitution, a magnificent training for a young lawyer destined to become the leading politician of his day.

DeWitt was not merely "the nephew of

his uncle," he was much more. So naturally did he take to politics, so skilfully did he manage, that his uncle soon entrusted to him the details of matters purely political. He was elected to the legislature in 1797 and four years later became a member of the Council of Appointment.

Now begins the reign of proscription. Young Clinton is the first politician to use the concentrated power of the Council for purely political purposes. He reorganized the state senate and managed the election of the members of the Council, and made himself the dictator of all its actions. The head of every Anti-Clintonian officeholder fell in that campaign for power. Sheriffs, surrogates, county clerks and recorders, mayors and judges, secretary of state and controller, justices by the score and auctioneers by the hundreds were ruthlessly swept from office and the friends of DeWitt Clinton installed.

At this moment the Clintons and Livingstones were acting in accord and divided the spoils. The larger state offices went to the Livingstones. Chancellor Livingstone, through Governor Clinton's influence, was appointed to a foreign embassy; Edward Livingstone became mayor of New York, the fattest job in the state. Dr. Tillotson, a brother-in-law of Chancellor Livingstone, was made secretary of state; Morgan Lewis, who had married a fair Livingstonian, became

chief justice of the Supreme Court; General Armstrong, who also had married into the Livingstone family, was elected United States Senator by the legislature; Brockholst Livingstone was made a judge of the Supreme Court, as was also Smith Thompson, whose wife was a Livingstone. Happy was the man who had married a Livingstone.

~~In New York city Clintonians were placed in office.~~ Thus the subordinate officers were all of DeWitt's choosing. Not a single place, however small, was allotted to Burr and his Tammany. The bitter struggle of Clinton's life was with the Burrites. He claimed he was the Democratic party. They laid title to the same claim. A third politician, VanBuren, later stepped between the warring factions and organized the real Democratic party from fragments of both. In the counties, too, Clintonians secured the justices and petty township offices.

~~At the end of a few short weeks, this bright young politician had revolutionized the political theory of officeholding, and instead of sanctifying public office as a public trust, he degraded it into party spoils; for from that time forward every justice of the peace became an electioneering officer, every county official a party slave, every auctioneer a ward heeler, and even the high officers of the state were underlings in this rigorous system of party discipline. From that day forth politics in New York~~

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were simply a struggle to control the Council of Appointment. Faction after faction fell victim to the vicissitudes of majorities and minorities, leader succeeded leader in the rotation of office.

DeWitt Clinton mounted into national prominence upon the pedestal of power he erected from the spoils of office. In 1801 he became United States senator, and at the age of thirty-two found himself the associate of the brilliant and erudite Gouverneur Morris. The sterling qualities of the youthful statesman were not dimmed by comparison with his experienced colleague.

After two years of service Clinton made the supreme political mistake of his life. He exchanged a seat in the national senate for the mayoralty of New York. By this step he plunged from the heights of national politics into the swirling depths of the pettiest and most degrading factional strife recorded in the annals of partisan history. For from 1800 until the slavery issue cast its deepening shadow over the land, political contests in New York were merely personal feuds between factions and families—feuds fought with a rancor and bitterness, with a disregard for truth and honor that make our modern political contests appear virtuous and present day bosses seem saintly. There was, of course, no such lavish outpouring of money, for candidates were poorer. But Clinton had taught men to view offices as



rewards, and the disgraceful wrangling over positions took the place of the modern struggle for campaign money.

Into this maelstrom of local politics Clinton allowed himself to be drawn. He himself had been the most potent force in starting in motion this seething torrent of partisan bitterness, and now he willingly dropped back again into the irresistible current, which hastened him headlong into the turmoils of victory and defeat. Through the vicissitudes of political fortune we will follow this singular man; we will see how his transformation from politician into statesman saved him from death by the very weapons his political genius had forged.

The position of mayor of New York was a place of power. The mayor had the disbursement of considerable patronage. He was the president of the common council, the chief judge of the common pleas court and of the criminal court, actual head of the police and fire departments, and chairman of the board of health. Many of the ancient privileges and fees granted by royal charter were still in force, and swelled the annual income of the position to \$12,000.

The appointment, made by the Council of Appointment, was for one year. Clinton held the position until 1815, excepting in brief intervals when the Lewisites were in control.

The Federal party was at this time little more than a band that clung to life with a



courage and tenacity that must elicit admiration. The Democratic or Republican party was divided into three factions, the Lewisites, led by Governor Lewis, a violent partisan, who later chose the suave Daniel D. Tompkins for their leader; the Burrites, led by Van Ness and Swartout, a little band of well-organized workers, whose headquarters were Martling's Tavern, and whose spirit was perennially fed by the desire to avenge their great chief; and the Clintonians, led by DeWitt and sheltered from popular wrath by the prestige of George Clinton. These three factions made New York city their seat of war, and from their fortified strongholds controlled the state. They all claimed to be the Republican or Democratic party, and continually accused one another of treachery and attempted alliances with the Federalists. It was this charge that Clinton had raised to read Burr out of the party in 1804, and it was the same charge that was hurled against Clinton in 1815, the year of his first downfall.

In this stifling atmosphere of narrow partisanship, DeWitt Clinton thrived, and the wonder is that its poisonous gases did not smother the greatness of his soul. He shared in all the littleness of the petty intrigues, the bar-room rivalries, the street-corner discussions. He dispensed the city patronage with the hauteur of a king. The following description of his methods and

his men appeared in 1810, and while it was written by an enemy, is a fair account of existing conditions, and is not nearly as violent as other contemporary attacks upon Clinton:

“You [Clinton] are encircled by a mercenary band, who, while they offer adulation to your system of terror, are ready at the first favorable moment to forsake and desert you. A portion of them are needy young men, who, without maturely investigating the consequence, have sacrificed principle to self-aggrandizement. Others are mere parasites, that well know the tenure on which they hold their offices, and will ever pay implicit obedience to those who administer to their wants. Many of your followers are among the most profligate of the community. They are the bane of social and domestic happiness, servile and dependent panderers.”

This was the partisan description of an enemy who, “In the presence of God and his country,” pledged himself to establish Clinton’s “duplicity and perfidy.”

John Wood, a school teacher, and the author of several intensely partial histories, thus described Clinton’s machinations in the council:

“De Witt Clinton, then in the Council of Appointment, regardless of the admonitions of his venerable uncle, was spreading with malignant fury, ruin and destruction throughout the state of New York. A band of pretended patriots, only capable of acting as

promoters of a puppet show, were hastening in to garble the fees of office. During this farcical scene, the auctioneers or hammermen were buzzing about like wandering bees that had lost their hive. Mothers were seen suppliant for days together in Mr. Clinton's lobby to obtain pardon for their sons; while affectionate wives did not hesitate to throw themselves at the feet of DeWitt to shield their husbands from beggary. Every villain in New York volunteered in his service."

These highly-colored views are somewhat distorted by partisanship. The truth is that Clinton, during these years of his mayoralty, did organize his following, which consisted mostly of artisans and the poorer classes, that he did stoop to vulgar methods, that he did use his office purely for selfish ends. He was particularly strong among the Irish and Scotch. His appointees were all his trusted followers. Barbers, bartenders, loiterers and artisans were active parts in his personal machine. Besides holding the office of mayor, Clinton also was a member of the state senate, and in 1811 was Lieutenant Governor. Thus he wielded double control: he held in his right hand the patronage of the state, and in his left the patronage of the city.

Meanwhile he made a good mayor. His temperament was judicial, not rash, and he presided in court with ponderous dignity,

and ruled with fairness and equity. His mind was progressive, and he delighted in the researches of natural science. He made a valuable member of the various city boards. In body he was a giant, well developed and robust, and he made an efficient police officer, feared by the mob, and obeyed by his lieutenants. He was present at nearly every fire, and several times his brawny arms helped to quell turbulent uprisings among the sailors and wharfmen. Withal, he had a gift for scientific research and literary expression, and this opened for him the doors of the most refined homes of the city, while his stately dignity and lavish hospitality made the mayor's mansion a renowned social center.

And Clinton was the embodiment of honesty; while he used office for power, he never used it for profit. I cannot find in the entire vituperative political froth of the day a single challenge of his integrity. It was this high-minded attitude on money matters that in later years endeared him to the people, and lifted him into power over the united strength of all factions.

A dispenser of favors is also a maker of enemies. The disappointed office seekers joined the rivals of Clinton, and in 1809 they succeeded in supplanting him. It was at this crisis that Clinton, then a member of the state senate, attempted his alliance with the Burrites. John Swartout was their

leader. Years before Clinton and Swartout had fought a duel at Weehawken over some point of honor raised by the Clintonian propaganda against Burr. It is one of the unique duels of history. At the first fire neither was hit. "Is the gentleman satisfied?" asked Clinton. Upon a negative, a second shot was exchanged, and Swartout's coat was pierced. Clinton again asked, "Is the gentleman's honor vindicated?" It was not. The third bullet lodged in Swartout's leg, but he remained standing to uphold such honor as had not been vindicated. The final bullet struck the other leg, and with both supports gone, over went the politician, his honor vindicated at last. Swartout soon regained the use of his legs, and they were swifter than ever in carrying destruction into the Clintonian camp.

But in 1809-10 Clinton was down and out, and therefore in need of aid. He turned to his bitterest foe. The price of peace was the restoration of Burr and the silencing of Cheetham, the Clintonian bloodhound. But when Clinton heard the wild clamor of his henchmen against the proposed union, he evaded the agreement in a manner unworthy the great leader he was.

Great national events were now agitating the people more profoundly than the mere question of transitory leadership. Napoleon's Milan and Berlin decrees, and the British Orders in Council were wrecking our

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trade and kidnapping our seamen. The war ferment was working in the hearts of patriots. And politicians were seeking to use this patriotic fervor for personal gain. Clinton was restored to the mayoralty in 1810, while his rival, Tompkins, was elected governor. The Lewisites tried to show that Clinton was not a patriot because he was opposed to war. All manner of puerile tactics were pursued to prove his heterodoxy. A mass meeting was called by Tammany to endorse President Madison's administration. Clinton was out of town. A Tammany paper, learning of this, printed in its next issue that "an abominable intrigue" was on foot to make Clinton chairman, and that this would be "an insult to public understanding." Clinton, of course, was not able to be present at the meeting, and the same paper proclaimed that he was absent because he was not a Republican and out of sympathy with its national attitude.

In 1811 Clinton was made lieutenant governor to fill a vacancy under Tompkins, his rival. This set Tammany in violent commotion. Martling's Long Room was the scene of a tumultuous meeting that nominated Marius Willet for the place, and resolved that Clinton was designing against the Republican party and was "determined to establish in his person a pernicious family aristocracy, that devotion to his person had been in a great measure made the ex-



clusive test of merit, and the only passport to promotion," and as he was opposed to Madison, he was therefore no longer a Republican.

Meanwhile the Clintonians met in the Union Hotel and resolved to stand by their patron, but before the meeting was adjourned, the Martlings rushed into the room, puffed out the candles, overturned the furniture, and broke up the meeting.

Clinton really did believe in war, but he believed in a rigorous and efficient warfare, not in the insipid and half-hearted attempts of Madison and Jefferson. He believed that the war should be delayed until the country had an army with at least a semblance of discipline, and a navy fit to coöperate with the army. To the Federalists he made his position seem one of inaction, therefore they rallied to his support. To the Republicans he seemed guilty of party treason, because he did not approve the course of Madison.

Clinton quite suddenly decided to become a candidate for President in 1812. With the advent of this ambition departed his political sagacity. For by what means could he hope to be elected, or even nominated? He was not a Federalist, and the Republican congressional caucus, under the domination of the Virginia dynasty, had renominated Madison. Clinton hated this dynasty. He could not forget that his uncle had been

ruthlessly pushed aside in 1808, to make way for Jefferson's favorite. He resolved to break the caucus system, to demolish the dynasty, to become President, and to promote a successful war with Great Britain.

The congressional caucus was in ill favor in New England and only one member from New York and four from the North-eastern Atlantic and New England states attended the caucus that named Madison. It had degenerated into a farce. The President and his cabinet controlled it completely. The will of the people was never consulted. It was boss rule, pure and simple, with the boss in the executive chair.

On May 28, 1812, a company of Republican members of the New York legislature nominated Clinton for President, and recommended him to the other states of the union. A committee of seventeen was appointed to carry this into effect. Thus did Clinton break the congressional caucus. This was running counter to all precedents, and several prominent Republicans refused to participate in the movement. Indeed, those present at the meeting hesitated long before they nominated Clinton, and the arrival of Van Cortland and other congressmen from Washington, with letters from Postmaster General Gideon Granger urging the action, led them to take this final step. It was an earnest and solemn meeting. Everyone present seemed impressed that they were

effecting a new departure in political methods. General Rust made an impressive speech, in which he endeavored to show how unwise it would be to nominate Clinton against Madison. He lauded Clinton, but said that the procedure would ruin him, and dramatically ended his harangue by throwing up his arms and crying: "Spare, oh spare, that great man!"

In September an attempt was made to induce Clinton to withdraw from the race. General King wrote to Judge Taylor: "No event would exalt Mr. Clinton higher than a surrender of his pretensions to the president's chair," and pledged the support of Massachusetts for Clinton in 1816. But Clinton's manager, Riker, would make no bargains "inconsistent with pure Republicanism." This correspondence was imprudently published and did much harm to Clinton's cause.

Clinton received 89 electoral votes against Madison's 128. The Virginia dynasty still held sway. Clinton's independent action divorced him from his party. In 1815 Tammany demanded his removal as mayor. The casting vote in the council was with Gov. Tompkins, who had presidential aspirations. He did not wish to offend Clinton's friends nor did he dare to refuse the demands of Tammany. Clinton was deposed.

He was now in a deplorable state. He had no business to which he could turn for a

livelihood. His generosity and un-wisdom had deprived him of his ample patrimony and the fortune of his wife. The Tammanyites seemed finally to have put away their bitter foe forever. Politically he was left alone in that most pitiable state, a man without a party. He was not a Federalist, and the Republicans gladly disowned him. Such are the vicissitudes of politics. Here stood the man who had taught his party the value of office as nourishment to party brawn, who had served with renown in national and state councils, who had been a formidable candidate for the Presidency, and who almost succeeded in amalgamating the Federal remnants to the progressive elements of the Republican party, who had befriended thousands with office, and elevated hundreds to places of prominence, here he stood alone, deserted, in want.

Martling's Long Room resounded with the din of merry toasts and the derisive laughter of victorious braves; for the very weapons that Clinton had wielded against Burr twelve years before, now had been thrust into his own heart, and the bitterest foe, the most unrelenting enemy, that Tammany had ever encountered lay dying on the field of battle.

This defeat was a turning point in the career of Clinton. His preparatory work as a politician was over, his task as a statesman began with his overthrow. We will

pause here to examine the manner of a man he had developed into, and try to find the sources of his great strength, for DeWitt Clinton was not dead, he was only metamorphosing from the voracious larva of a spoils-hunting politician into the glorious imago of a wise and useful statesman.

Clinton once wrote to a colleague: "In a political warfare, the defensive side will eventually lose. Energy in a good cause will carry everything. The meekness of Quakerism will do in religion, but not in politics. I repeat it: everything will answer with energy and decision." This was Clinton's political rule. In his youth he was given to energy, in middle life he added decision, and in the ripeness of years he applied them to a good cause. In his youth he had resorted to all the tricks of the politician. There was not a device known to careful vote-getting that he did not employ. He utilized everything in securing majorities, public office, scholarship, passion, prejudice, appetite, were all made servient to his ambition. As years matured his thought and gave dignity to his bearing, he forgot the tricks of the politician and relied more upon his personal influence. His machine became his personal machine, and his power was personal. He looked after all the details of organization himself. He was ambitious to build up a great party, it should be a Clintonian party, of which



he should be the center of gravity and to which he would attract such atoms as would willingly be drawn by the mystic powers of his personal energy. Such a leader he could become for a state only. Our country has never had a national personal party. The influence of a national issue must unite with a great personality to create a national party.

Clinton was a fighter. He fought flesh with flesh, blow was given in exchange for blow. And when hit, he struck right back blindly, without taking time to plan. He could fight men, but not parties, and he made all of his battles personal encounters. This added a bitterness to his politics which is hard to understand to-day. Politics were personal with him. He could unmake candidates, but not overthrow conspiracies.

Clinton never forgave. He was relentless. His temper was terrible in its sudden gusts of passionate wrath. Impatient was he, and proud, disdaining weaklings and scorning the mediocre. His jealousy was all-consuming. In later years his love for adulation became a mania. He could not endure one rival. Physically he was as perfect as an Apollo; mentally he was as analytic as Bacon; in demaenor he was austere as a Roman. In private life he was pure and affectionate. He was absolutely honest. To his followers he kept his troth, to the public he was faithful to the least fraction of a cent.



*end*  
*see* He was as constructive in his statesmanship as he was destructive in his political manoeuvre. As mayor he started the Free School Association, the forerunner of the public schools; he was a patron of the arts and sciences, and was devoted with filial affection to the commercial welfare of his city, looking after her harbors, and markets, and streets, and public buildings with greater care than men usually bestow upon their own estates.

As a member of the legislature, he was incessant in his activity in behalf of progressive measures. He introduced bills organizing the state schools system, the Sailor's Snug Harbor, the City Hospital, the first fire insurance company of New York, the first Academy of Arts and Sciences of New York. Thus also did he charter Astor's American Fur Company, the Humane Society, the New York Missionary Society. The range of subjects introduced by him covers the entire field of human endeavor and philanthropy, and a mere enumeration of the titles of his measures would occupy several pages. The tremendous energy of his mind knew no pause.

I have said that politics with him was a personal matter. He shared with Andrew Jackson that unfortunate self-fatuation that denies to others the right of independent thought. To express sentiments contrary to his own convictions, was to be at enmity

with him. I consider this personal rancor the great weakness of DeWitt Clinton, for had he possessed the gracious demeanor and kindly soul of his rival, Governor Tompkins, he would have been the most formidable American of his day.

His letters reveal this dismal and repelling quality of soul which blinded his foresight, warped his judgment, and fed his imperious temper. Van Buren is an "arch scoundrel," "the prince of villains," a "confirmed knave." Calhoun is "a thorough-paced blackleg," "base and dishonorable." Crawford is "as hardened a ruffian as Burr." John Quincy Adams, "In politics an apostate, in private life a pedagogue, and everything but amicable and honest." Governor Yates is "perfidious and weak." Wheaton, the writer on International Law, "is a pitiful scoundrel," Rufus King a "declaimer," Judge Thompson, of the United States Supreme Court, "is one of the domestic circles of President Monroe, and one of the coterie of old women that surround him." But his personalities did not stop with adjectives and expletives. He even stooped to the filth of scandal. "You see what they say about Mrs. M. It is said that Van Buren paid her rent when under distress in this place." Even Puritanic John Quincy Adams he associated with similar immoralities. For the minor characters in his political drama, Clinton expressed still greater contempt.

In spite of his foolish jealousies that enwrapped his mind as a cold and humid fog enshrouds a mountain peak, Clinton towered in stately dignity above the busy politicians who had aimed his destruction.

Clinton was a devoted lover of nature and had the gift of a true scientific instinct. He devoted himself to the study, particularly of those branches of science that were not merely speculative, but were also useful to mankind. The results of his investigations he wrote in luminous, though often stilted, English, for the periodicals. And he was greatly in demand as a speaker upon special occasions.

He had early become interested in the history of the Five Nations and other Indian tribes, then fast vanishing before the aggressiveness of civilization. He discovered a new native variety of wheat, and a new species of fish in the Hudson. He was elected a member of the Linnæan Society of London. He inquired into the utilization of the water power of the streams of his state, the stocking of lakes and ponds with fish. He had been for a number of years the president of the Literary and Philosophical Society of New York, was an active member of the Academy of Fine Arts, and of the Historical Society. He was the intimate companion of Dr. Hossack, a well known botanist, and of Dr. Mitchell of the Columbia faculty, among the

first zealots of the new science of zoölogy. Clinton outranked many specialists in the power of observation and research, for he left more permanent contributions to science than most of his professional friends. Had he so chosen, Clinton might have become a great naturalist.

To all of these interests in science and the utilities of nature, he could devote only such fragments of time as he could snatch from the busy hours of politics and administration. Throughout his public life it was his custom to rise very early and dispose of his correspondence before breakfast, reserving the day for business and the evening for pleasure and study.

He was a man without a party, but he had a cause. The one power that is greater in politics than a machine and a hundred thousand offices, is a cause that appeals to the hearts of voters and to their reason. Clinton had such an issue. It was created by his scientific spirit and was nurtured into maturity by his statecraft. It is one of a rare number of political issues that have found origin in scientific study and favor with the populace.

A waterway connecting the Hudson with the great lakes had long been one of the dreams of commercial New York. In 1809 Clinton was appointed one of a commission to investigate the subject. There was confusion as to the best route, some preferring

the Ontario connection to that of Lake Erie. There was great doubt as to the practicability of any plan of such magnitude, and the enormous cost of the undertaking staggered the taxpayer and the legislator. Clinton attacked the problem with all his native energy. His scientific instinct and knowledge of public affairs united in enabling him in giving definite shape to the issue, and his wide reputation gave immediate prominence to his plan.

In 1815 he prepared an exhaustive memorial detailing the results of the state surveys; massing the argument in favor of the Erie route; estimating in detail the cost; demonstrating the practicability of the canal; and closing with a fervent patriotic plea for the immediate constructing of a public work that would add so greatly to the prosperity of the state and strengthen the bonds of union with the great west.

This memorial stands as one of the able state papers of the century. Its argument was so convincing, its spirit was so lofty and non-partisan, that for the moment all opposition was breathless. The memorial was first submitted to a meeting of leading business men and politicians in New York city, held in the city hall in the autumn of 1815. It was signed by great numbers of citizens and was sent on a triumphal journey through the state, where it was received with enthusiasm at public meetings, and thus rein-



forced it was presented to the legislature. Clinton went to Albany personally to direct the fortune of his measure.

In April, 1816, a commission was appointed to "provide for the improvement of the internal navigation of the state." Clinton was the life of this commission. His learning and enthusiasm and practical sense directed its procedure, and he personally conducted the members over the 440 miles of the ground to be traversed by the canal. He wrote the report, drafted the law providing for the construction of the canal, and led the contest in the legislature for its passage. This contest was a bitter one. The Tammanyites opposed it to a man, for purely personal reasons. They disapproved everything Clinton espoused. Even after its passage through the legislature it met unusual opposition in the Council of Revision. Governor Tompkins was violent in his hostility. He did not wish to give Clinton the political advantage such a measure would insure. Clinton carefully evolved a scheme for financing the canal. He studied the authorities on public finance and corresponded with the leading merchants and financiers of his day, both in this country and in Europe. His diary is filled with extracts from authorities and letters upon the subject, and shows how carefully he worked out the practical details of the law. Clinton convinced Chancellor Kent and thus saved the



measure in the Council of Revision. This was one of Clinton's greatest victories.

Governor Tompkins had been reëlected, but resigned in 1816 to accept the vice-presidency under Monroe. The people promptly clamored for Clinton. But the legislative caucus was hostile. In these caucuses only those people were represented that had representatives in the legislature. Thus the Federalists in a Republican district were never represented in a caucus of their party. The Clintonians now clamored for a convention in which the Clintonians of every county should be represented, whether they had a member in the legislature or not. The counties that had representatives in the legislature were to be represented by their members. Clinton was popular in the Federal counties, and his managers knew that he could win the nomination in such a gathering.

Tammany hurled itself into the campaign with fiendish ardor. They had no issues except Clinton's personality, and his canal. Sarcasm and ridicule were their weapons.

In the hall of the Literary and Philosophical Society were busts and portraits of celebrities. In 1819 the bust of Franklin was added. The following dialogue appeared in a Tammany print.

"Bust of Franklin:  
'Here in good company—Rousseau,  
Great Newton, Buffon, Sully, Daguesseau,

The choicest spirits of the mighty dead.  
But who is that above our Newton's head?'

"Vice President (Clinton):

'Tis Dr. Clinton, our state's chief reliance,  
A paragon of learning, wit and science.  
Skilled in all arts, the Crichton of our day.'

"Bust:

'Quick take me down, for here I cannot stay  
Clinton so grand, Newton so small below!  
These portraits by their contrasts strangely  
show

How little place has science here obtained,  
And how triumphantly imposture reigns.'

Of his "big ditch" they sang:

"Oh a ditch he would dig from the lakes to  
the sea,

The eighth of the world's matchless wonders  
to be,

Good land, how absurd! But why should  
you grin?

It will do to bury its mad author in."

But the triumphant Clintonians, their  
chief elected by 40,000 votes, over a bare  
1,500 given to the Martling candidate,  
shouted gleefully in response:

"Witt Clinton is dead, St. Tammany said,  
And all the papposes with laughter were  
weeping,

But Clinton arose and confounded his foes,  
The cunning old fox had only been sleep-  
ing."

Clinton now had an opportunity to conciliate Tammany. The landslide had swept away the hostile majorities, and he controlled the legislature and the Council of Appointment. But Clinton could not forgive. He gave a reception at his home for the members of the legislature, but he would not invite the Tammany members. "The miserable bucktails," he said, "are unfit for such courtesy." His bitterness baptized the Martlings with a new name, and "bucktails"\* they remained long after death had finally taken away the most stubborn foe they ever encountered.

The Clintonians had the majorities, but the Bucktails had the leaders. Van Buren, brilliant and full of resource, was more than a match for Clinton, who had forgotten his cunning and tried to rule with a hand of iron. Trip-hammer authority cannot last long in politics. Through lack of a leader, the majority had its power wrested from it. Van Buren drove the wedge of partisanship deeper and deeper between the two factions, attempting thereby to sever Clinton entirely from the body of his party, and let the Bucktails remain the true democracy. Clinton had shown some favor toward the Federal remnants, alleging that they were no party, and

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\*The regalia of Tammany Hall prescribed that the tail of a deer be worn on the cap. Hence Clinton took his suggestion for the name "Bucktails."

therein he was right. Van Buren said they were a party, that their fire had not gone out, but was merely in embers, and any man who showed the least desire to blow upon these embers was not a Republican.

Clinton was ambitious to amalgamate the Federal and Republican factions into one strong party, a Clintonian party. Van Buren was determined to emphasize all the differences and split the factions, so that he would be the leader of the Republican party, and Clinton an apostate.

Two charges were spoken against Clinton. First, he was the party. From youth up he had been a dictator, a disburser of patronage. He was haughty, cold and responsive only to praise. Secondly, he was a Federalist. Did he not in 1812 bargain with the Federalists for the presidency against a Republican president? Did he not curry their favor in state and city councils? Had he not even in the past few months appointed some of that tainted company to office?

Such is the human love for orthodoxy, that the ruse succeeded. Van Buren wrested for his minority the control of the legislature and council from the majority. The "*Albany Argus*," a Bucktail organ, said: "A majority of the canal commissioners are now politically opposed to the governor, and it will not be necessary for a person who wishes to obtain employment on the canal

as agent, contractor or otherwise, to avow himself a Clintonian."

The Bucktails, seeing that the Governor's majorities were drawn by his canal policy, resolved to embarrass him by voting for exorbitant appropriations, intending to inveigle him into opposing their bill and make it appear that he had abandoned his favorite measure. But they failed in their purpose.

The election of 1819 gave Clinton once more the control of the Council of Appointment, and the former vigor of the staid old politician seemed to return. Bucktails were removed by the score. Richard Ricker, a popular and efficient recorder, was removed, as was also Van Buren, the attorney general. So wild and delirious was this council, that its action caused comment, even in those days. The partisan spirit of the day is illustrated by the following incident:

The county of Ulster had not for many years had a member in the Council of Appointment. Jacobus S. Bruyn, an independent, high-minded descendant of good Dutch stock was mentioned for the place. One day he met Ambrose Spencer, Clinton's confidential man and manager, who asked Bruyn whether he would follow the route marked out for him, if elected. Bruyn did not even answer this insolent question, but walked away, indignant at the insult. Soon after he met Clinton, who asked: "Sir, will you follow the path we have marked out for

you, if you are elected to the Council?" Bruyn answered that he would make no promises and that, if elected, he should act as he thought proper. "Then," Clinton exclaimed, "I'll be damned if you should have my vote if I had one." The dauntless Dutchman replied that he would not thank him for his vote, and had not asked it. Ulster County remained without a representative in the Council.

It is a pity so much of mere clay should enter into the compound of so superior a man.

In 1820 a legislative caucus of Republicans nominated Senator Tompkins for governor. He was the Bucktail candidate. The Clintonians stayed away from the caucus and called a convention, which named Clinton.

Van Buren, by a sharp trick, had drawn the Federalists away from Clinton. He did this by endorsing Rufus King, a Federalist United States Senator, for reelection. He became guilty of the same political sin of which he had so often accused Clinton. Consistency is not a jewel meant to shine in the crown of a political czar.

Soon after the canvass began, a number of Federalists circulated an address accusing Clinton of personal aggrandizement and favoritism, and affirming that as "high-minded" men they could not support him. This was the harvest of Van Buren's support of



Senator King. The "high-minded Federalists," however, could not entice all their faction into the Bucktail ranks. Clinton was reelected, but by a majority of only 1457 votes. The canal zone saved him. Had the Governor displayed a conciliatory spirit, and had he been as highly endowed with political sagacity as he was with personal prowess, he would probably have been reelected without opposition. But his arbitrary manner and unbending temper made enemies, bitter and unforgiving, while his utter lack of management disorganized his own following, and made them easy victims.

While he succeeded in his canvass, everything else went against him. The legislature and with it the Council, were in complete control of his enemies, and his arch foe, Van Buren, was sent to the United States senate. The council made a clean sweep. Its leader, Skinner, was a violent foe of Clinton and played the governor's own game with skill. Every office was vacated, even military commissions were recalled, and the state superintendent of schools was removed. Controller McIntyre, who had held office fourteen years, although there had been in that interval four Councils hostile to him, was removed. He was a very able and popular official, and his removal caused a sensation. He was immediately elected to the state senate, as a rebuke of this whole-

sale slaughter. It was a clean-cut issue, the people rebuked the politicians.

Happily for New York, this session of the legislature called a constitutional convention, which did away with the notorious Council of Appointment. What a ghastly record this political guillotine had made! Not one prominent politician in the state, but had felt the deep cut of its keen blade; senators, governors, judges, mayors, sheriffs, clerks, justices, militia officers, and school officials all shared alike in the annual carnival of carnage and slaughter. The political headsman was no respecter of persons. The knitting woman was kept busy counting the severed heads, as they rolled from under the drop. Some were resurrected by the miracle of majority, but most of them were left to decay on the ghastly heap where the red-handed spoilsman had tossed them.

The new constitution was radically democratic. In place of a council of review was placed a governor's veto, the bars of franchise were thrown down and everyone allowed to vote, the appointing power was reduced to a few subordinate places and the greatly increased electorate given free hand in the choice of all officers, petty and great. From one extreme to the other swung the pendulum of public sentiment. The vote adopting the new constitution stood 75,422 to 41,497. The voice of the people did not waver.

The Bucktail legislature was insolent in its hostility to Clinton. It had been the custom of the governor to deliver his annual message verbally. The Bucktails "Resolved that the custom of delivering a speech by the executive to the legislature is a remnant of royalty, not recommended by any consideration of public utility, and ought to be abolished." The resolution was not adopted, but it reveals the petty spirit of the house.

The national administration, hostile to Clinton, filled the New York custom house with Bucktails, and in the last election, the government appointees had displayed a partisan activity that was more than pernicious. The federal office-holders had marched the employees of the Navy Yard to the polls, to the music of bands and under banners floating Bucktail slogans. The husky sailors and workmen were not content to deposit their own vote merely, but bullied and threatened all comers until the election was turned into a general riot. Clinton, always willing to use office-holders for his own benefit, was angered by this display of force, and sent a message to the legislature asking an investigation. The message was so voluminous that it was conveyed to the chambers in a green bag, and was therefore called the "Green Bag Message." The legislature referred it to a joint committee, which rebuked the governor severely for

his presumption, and alleged that federal interference had never been observed in any state elections. This was from the Bucktail viewpoint.

At the end of his second term, Clinton was again without a party. The strongest man in public life in his state, he was yet the weakest man in New York politics. He had entered the governor's office practically without opposition, in four years his friends advised him that to be a candidate again would be futile. He was to be let down from the heights of power as quietly and gracefully as possible. A mass meeting was held; he was eulogized, and a committee appointed to ask him to run again. As had been prearranged, he refused, and appeared to retire voluntarily to private life.

The dearest object of his heart, the creation of a personal party, was impossible to a man of his strength and weakness. For in him were blended the elements of strength, honesty, courage, learning; and the elements of weakness, vanity, arbitrariness and intolerance. The strength of his character was not such as to draw the politician, and his weaknesses were such as repelled those who could have built for him a party. A party cannot exist without a manager, a manipulator. Clinton was too great a man to spend his time in mere manipulation, and too proud a man to be manipulated.

The Bucktails had elected governor and

legislature, carried city and state. For a second time they had completely overthrown their arch enemy. Surely now he was vanquished forever. In the delirium of their joy they resurrected their fallen foe. The only office that now remained to him was that of canal commissioner, an office with great tasks and no pay. At the last day of the session of 1824, almost at the last hour, the senate passed a resolution deposing DeWitt Clinton from this office. There were only three votes recorded against the motion. The resolution was rushed into the house and startled the astonished members out of their senses. A whirlwind of partisan frenzy swept a majority of almost two-thirds into line, and for the first time since 1797, DeWitt Clinton was without office.

In the house only one voice was raised against the removal, but it was the voice of prophecy, and its utterance was the sentiment of the people. Cunningham, of Montgomery county, an uneducated man, but a strong character whose heart nature had warmed with love, and whose tongue had been touched with the gift of eloquence, made an impassioned and noble plea:

"I dare assert in my place that his doings as a canal commissioner are unimpeached and unimpeachable, and such as have even elicited the plaudits and admiration of his political enemies. This, then, is the official character of the man whom we now seek to

destroy. \* \* \* I am well aware that some honorable gentlemen may think, if they vote against this resolution, they will be suspected in their politics. Such consideration ought not to influence us on this subject. Mr. Clinton is not in the political market, he reposes in the shades of honorable retirement, he asks for no office and possesses none but the one of which he is about to be stripped.

“The senate, it appears, has been actuated by some cruel and malignant passion unaccounted for, and have made a rush upon this house and have taken us on surprise. The resolution may pass, but if it does, my word for it, we are disgraced in the judgment and good sense of an injured and intelligent community. Whatever the fate of this resolution may be, let it be remembered that Mr. Clinton has acquired a reputation not to be destroyed by the pitiful malice of a few leading partisans of the day.

“When the contemptible party strife of the present day shall have passed by, and the political bargainers and jugglers, who now hang around this capitol for a subsistence, shall be overwhelmed and forgotten in their own insignificance, when the gentle breeze shall pass over the tomb of that great man, carrying with it the just tribute of honor and praise which is now withheld, the pen of the future historian, in better days and in better times, will do him justice and



erect to his memory a proud monument of fame, as imperishable as the splendid works which owe their origin to his genius and perseverance."

The effect upon the people of the removal of their favorite hero was like an electric shock. Their response was as sudden and lurid and destructive of the legislators as a bolt of lightning.

The people of Albany rushed at once to the capitol in great throngs, and expressed their contempt for the act and their sympathy with Clinton. Their resolutions were sincere:

"Resolved, That we have sought in vain for any palliating circumstances to mitigate this most glaring outrage, and that we can only regard it as the offspring of that malignant and insatiable spirit of political proscription which has already so deeply stained the annals of our state.

"Resolved, That the perpetrators of this act of violence and ingratitude are utterly unworthy of public confidence and justly deserve the reprobation of an injured and insulted community.

"Resolved, That for the boldness with which he planned, the patriotic devotion with which he undertook, and the high and commanding talents and unremitted ardor with which he has successfully prosecuted a scheme of internal improvement, surpassing in magnitude all that had ever been

conceived on this side of the Atlantic, and no less useful than it is grand, this distinguished citizen is entitled to the admiration, gratitude and the applause of his country, and especially the state of New York."

These resolutions were conveyed to Clinton by a notable committee of citizens. The citizens in New York city took a similar course to express their disapproval of their legislature. The entire state was aroused. The Bucktails had miscalculated. Instead of differentiating the Clintonians from the newly organized People's Party, their rash action amalgamated sentiment and brought Clinton forward by universal demand as the candidate for governor.

The People's Party had been organized in 1823 as an anti-caucus, anti-Crawford party. A convention was held at Utica in September, 1824. It was the first state convention composed entirely of delegates chosen for that purpose. No members of the legislature were ex-officio delegates. There were 122 delegates. The proceedings were novel and compared with present day conventions, crude and simple. "The first day was spent in organizing and in ascertaining each other's opinions and views." To-day these are ascertained before the delegates are appointed. In the Utica convention this exchange of opinions was free and on the floor of the convention. To-day the utter-

ances of opinions as to candidates are guarded and are expressed only in the inner chambers of headquarters. There was some opposition to Clinton, and the New York city delegation withdrew from the convention and named General Young as their candidate.

Clinton's majority at the polls was 16,906. Of the eight senatorial districts, he carried six. Two years before all had gone against him. But again Clinton failed to hold his following together. Van Buren had formed his "Albany Regency," a band of shrewd and designing politicians, and they began at once to undermine Clinton's strongholds. The governor's party in the legislature was composed of good men, honest enough, but totally devoid of political sagacity. Clinton himself would listen to no advice. He said he would "rather reign in hell than serve in heaven!" His majorities were dashed to fragments on the rocks of his stubborn willfulness. John Quincy Adams, newly elected President, offered him the ambassadorship to Great Britain, but Clinton refused to accept. In this he made a mistake. He was harboring ambitions to become President. This appointment would have given him a national character and removed him for a time from the personal antagonists in his native state. His influential friends urged him to accept, but the petty men who depended upon his remaining, flattered him

into the refusal by intimating that Adams was jealous of his growing power and wished to banish him and thus remove a rival.

In 1827 at a mass meeting in Steubenville, Ohio, Clinton was nominated for the Presidency and Jackson for Vice-President. A committee was appointed to formulate an address to the people and to correspond with other states. This was a common method of starting a presidential boom in those years. Clinton believed that in case of a deadlock in the election, he could be chosen. He disliked Monroe because he was a member of the Virginia dynasty. He mistrusted Adams because he believed he had bought the Presidency by bargaining with Clay. When he became convinced that he could not himself become President, he favored Jackson, and hoped to become Vice-President.

The year 1825 was one of triumph and glory for the veteran statesman. He visited Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania, and was everywhere received with respect and enthusiasm as the "Dean of Internal Improvements." And this year witnessed the completion of his greatest achievement, the Erie Canal. From Buffalo to New York city he traveled by boat in triumph, receiving the congratulations and plaudits of the populace. The merchants of New York city presented him with a costly pair of silver vases in commemoration of the event,

and from every city in the Union came congratulatory messages. The history of this great canal has fully justified all that its wise projector had claimed for it. In his message to the legislature in 1827 he announced the final completion of all the details of the canal. The amount of the tolls for the preceding year had been \$770,000, nearly twice the amount of the interest on the debt.

While thus the outer aspect of Clinton's career was bright, there lurked within the deepening shadows of political discontent. The Albany Regency was conducting a secret and effective campaign against him. In 1826 he was unanimously renominated in Utica, and Henry Huntington, a banker of prominence and worth, for lieutenant governor. Despite a promise to support him, the Regency party held a convention at Herkimer, thus recognizing and establishing as good form that method of nominating candidates, and named Judge Rochester for governor and Nathaniel Pitcher for lieutenant governor. Rochester was a weak man, Pitcher a very able man. This was a trick of Van Buren to secure New York for Jackson, by indirectly supporting Clinton, and to save the legislature for Van Buren by electing a strong lieutenant governor. Clinton was elected, having been supported in secret by Van Buren. His majority was 3,650. Pitcher was also elected by a majority of 4,188.

This was his final triumph at the polls. With the advent of Jackson in national politics, Clinton's prospects for promotion were bright, for Jackson ardently admired his talents. A seat in the cabinet, the vice-presidency, and the executive chair seemed within his reach. But it was not to be. A promotion more enduring than that created by ambition or insured by a partisan victory secured for him a lasting place among the noted names of his country. He died in the midst of the activities of public office, when the greatest of his works was streaming commercial prosperity through the heart of his native state, when his fame was as extended as the causes he encouraged, and his name was spoken with honor in every commonwealth and known in every progressive city of the globe.

On February 11, 1828, just as he had finished writing in his diary and was reading the afternoon mail, death stilled the heart that had sustained so valiant a fighter, and forever sealed the mind that had planned so wisely for his fellowmen. His friend, Dr. Hosack, had warned him of the danger of his malady some weeks before his death. He simply replied: "I am not afraid to die."

He was among the last of the politicians who had aided in the formation of the first political parties of our country, and as regards the practical effects on politics, was

Say

S.P. One



the most potent. In his manipulation of the Council of Appointment he planted the seedling of the Upas tree of American politics, the spoils system; through his antagonism of the Virginia dynasty and the Tammany machine, he demolished the methods of caucus control and inaugurated the convention plan; through his genius he evolved an issue and taught his contemporaries the superiority of character over trickery.

His career was one of anomalies, of paradoxes. In the beginning he was the most clever of manipulators; in the end he had utterly forgotten the art of intrigue. The boy politician grew into the statesman. A strategist for his uncle, he could not devise for himself. Ambitious for political power, he was stone blind to the strength of his foes. His victories were the sources of his weakness.

Respected by all the people, yet he could not draw to him the politicians of his party. He was never defeated for an elective office, except for the Presidency in 1812. But the political leaders avoided him. Even those of his own making finally forsook their creator. He chose Morgan Lewis, and made him governor over Aaron Burr. Lewis abandoned him, joined the Livingstones and intrigued to destroy his maker. Out of obscurity he lifted Daniel Tompkins, schooled him in the rudiments of politics, and started

him on the highway to national eminence. And Tompkins turned against him all his remarkable native powers and sought to slay his master. He discovered Tennis Wortman and made him a local leader of celebrity. And Wortman joined Tammany to lead their unscrupulous assaults against his benefactor. When Martin Van Buren first entered the legislature, he immediately took up the fight for Clinton. Before the year ended an estrangement began that was never healed. Singular paradox! The man whose character was the object of popular reverence could not win one lasting political leader of first rank.

He was the victim of the very arts he practiced on his foes. He accused the Burr-ites with favoring the Federalists. They hurled the charge back in 1812. He discomfited Governor Jay by using a hostile Council of Appointment. Van Buren served him a similar trick. He claimed to be the Republican party. His opponents stole his title. He organized a convention when he could not control a caucus. His foes bolted his convention and organized one of their own.

In Clinton's soul was fought the struggle between politician and statesman, between patriot and partisan, between scholar and boss. In him was embodied the mighty struggle between idealism and realism, which is to-day the paramount problem of American politics.

and  
He made a great governor. Even without his canal policy the multitude of beneficial measures he inaugurated would have maintained him at the head of the long list of the Empire State's great executives. Science, commerce, and philanthropy were the objects of his solicitude and the protégés of his genius. A study of his contributions to the laws of New York and to the official literature of the state is a liberal education in statecraft. And a better administrator of the laws never wielded executive power. Devoted throughout his life to the services of his commonwealth, he died a statesman of national fame. Very few men have had the singular genius thus to rise to national eminence upon purely local issues.

Nor is there, unfortunately, any doubt of the pettiness of his personal encounters. So much of the bitter of jealousy blended with the sweet of his talents; so many shadows were flung by his arrogance across the light of his genius, that the admiration of the multitude is almost lost in the personal hatred of his opponents. He was a man to be respected, not loved; to be antagonized, not opposed. And hated was he with a partisan frenzy that did not cease even after his lifeless form had been carried to the tomb.

He left a very small estate, for in serving the state he had neglected his fortune. Nor did it ever enter his mind to profit by the

land speculations his canal policy made possible. For twenty years he had acted as a canal commissioner without pay. A bill was introduced into the legislature authorizing the payment to his children of a sum of money equal to the amount of the salary of a canal commissioner during the time of his service and one year's salary as governor of the state. This was just and generous. But the rage of personal enmity defeated the measure. After a disgraceful controversy the sum of \$10,000 was finally voted.

Eleven years later Governor Seward in his message to the legislature, after a glowing tribute to DeWitt Clinton, recommended "that the ashes of that illustrious citizen be deposited underneath a monument to be erected in this city." But a decade had not wiped out the prejudices of a lifetime. The monument was not erected. This was the last public insult that Tammany offered the memory of her most valiant foe.



MARTIN VAN BUREN

NATIONALIZER OF THE MACHINE









# MARTIN VAN BUREN

## NATIONALIZER OF THE MACHINE

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**I**N 1816 there were 123 members in the New York Assembly; 61 were Federalists and 61 were Republicans or Democrats, and the final place was contested between Henry Fellows, a Federalist, and Peter Allen, a Republican, both from Ontario County. In the town of Pennington 49 votes had been cast for Henry Fellows. These votes gave him a majority of thirty in his county. The inspectors of elections in Pennington filed a copy of his certificate, properly written as Henry Fellows. But the duplicate which they filed with the county clerk read, "Hen. Fellows." The county clerk rejected the votes and thus gave Allen a majority of 19. Both contestants went to Albany. For a week the chamber was a scene of disgraceful wrangling. The Republicans allowed Allen to vote during the organization of the house. Thus they could elect a speaker] and a Council of Appointment. After these places of advantage had been secured for them, they seated the Federalist, Fellows.

New York was at this time divided into four senatorial districts. In 1817 two sena-

tors were to be chosen from the western district, one to fill a vacancy and the other for a full term of four years. The two candidates were Dr. Jediah Prendergast, a Clintonian, for the long term, and Isaac Wilson, a Bucktail, for the short term. The law insisted, however, that the candidate having the largest number of votes should be declared elected for the long term. Wilson received 1509 votes, Jediah Prendergast 1485 votes, Jedediah Prendergast 91 and Jed. Prendergast 10. Wilson was given the certificate of election for the four year term. But 42 electors were found who swore that they voted for Jedediah, intending to vote for Jediah. This would give the Doctor the long term. There could be no doubt as to the fairness of this course, but the Bucktails were determined to have their man. Colonel Young, the Bucktail champion, carried his Bible into the senate chamber and quoted passages where both names, Jediah and Jedediah, were found. "Would the Bucktails rebel against revelation?"

In 1818 the term of the two senators from the middle district expired. This was a Clintonian district. Ross, of Orange County, a staunch Clintonian, was a candidate for re-election. There was a dispute between Otsego and Greene Counties as to which should name the second candidate. Otsego's candidate was Arumah Metcalf, a Clintonian.

Greene County put forward Moses Austin, a Bucktail. The counties left the dispute to a caucus of the members of the legislature from that district for decision. This caucus was Clintonian. The Bucktails knew that the friends of Ross were fearful that if they favored Otsego the other counties would combine against Ross and defeat him. This fear was the wedge which the Bucktails used in splitting the ranks of the Clintonians, and they succeeded. Instead of two Clintonian senators, only one went from the middle district.

In 1819, 42 Bucktails and 49 Clintonians were elected to the house. The Bucktails were secretly advised to appear in Albany at a caucus to be held on the evening before the session was to open. All the Bucktails were present, while fifteen of the unsuspecting Clintonians were absent. The Bucktails' candidate for speaker, Thompson, an ardent Clinton hater, was nominated. Thereupon the Clintonians withdrew from the caucus and named German, who was subsequently elected by the aid of the few Federalists in the house. This is what the Bucktails worked for. They desired to make the Clintonians appear as bolters and apostates and they would then be the regulars.

In 1821 the instigator of all of these petty plans, the boss of the Bucktails, the czar of the Regency, was elected United States senator, and Martin Van Buren transferred



the activities of his political intriguing from the narrow field of New York politics to the broad field of national politics; he widened the horizon of his ambition and began the careful campaign that in fifteen years placed him at the head of the first compact national political organization and made him President.

Van Buren was born in 1782 in Kinderhook-on-the-Hudson. His parents were of Dutch descent, the father an easy-going, shiftless tavern-keeper, the mother an industrious, thrifty, noble woman. His school education was brief, he quitted the village master when fourteen years old. But his mother trained him in thrift and the tavern offered him, even in childhood, opportunity for mixing with men, learning their weaknesses and their strength, together with their names and their predilections. It was this schooling that he received at home, more than the schooling of books and rules, that opened for him the pathway to eminence, for Van Buren was above all things thrifty, and he knew, beyond all others, how to mingle with men and gain their confidence.

At the age of fourteen he entered a law office and began his seven years' apprenticeship in the law. The last of these years he passed in New York city in the office of William P. Van Ness, the confidant and lieutenant of Aaron Burr. The impress of this year,

formed of associations with the greatest political plotter of his day and his most trusted aide, was never effaced from his life. His whole political career is flavored with Aaron Burr.

Van Buren was not a great lawyer, but he was a very successful one. His ability enabled him to make money, his thrift enabled him to save it. In twenty years he was possessed of a fortune valued at \$200,000, a large sum for that day. Lawsuits flourished in profusion among the patroons and burghers in the Hudson Valley. Damage cases and title contests abounded in amazing frequency. Van Buren was resourceful, ingenious and crafty; he was well read, fluent and versatile; he was above all painstaking and industrious, homely virtues rarely found where cunning and brilliancy abound. These qualities won him early fame at the bar, attracted to his office a rich clientele, and saved for him the fortune that became his mainstay in politics, and enabled him to spend his declining years in comfort and dignified ease.

But it was not as a lawyer that Van Buren chose to shine. Circumstances drew him into politics, nature impelled him to remain. For his natural endowments were those of a preëminent politician. He possessed an abiding good temper, which never was known to become either sharp or dull. His natural amiability never allowed the smile

X to fade from his lips, or the glad hand to be removed into his pockets. He was skilled in intrigue and could plan successful campaigns, whether for township, or state, or national elections. He was kind-hearted, and men could not hate him, though probably few really loved him. He was never outspoken on any subject until the majority had expressed an opinion. And finally he had a memory for names that never failed him. He could travel the country over and shake hands with more people, mentioning their names, and often the names of their families, than any other man of his day. This is superlatively the politician's stronghold among the masses: to shake a man's hand, call him familiarly by name, smilingly ask after the welfare of wife and family. This trick of memory and design is quite as potent in American politics as issues, or money, or both.

Before he was old enough to vote, Van Buren was a committeeman, and active in the Republican factions of Columbia county. When he was only 26, the Council of Appointment made him surrogate. Five years later, in 1813, he became state senator. This was a real triumph of popularity, because his county was a Federal stronghold. In 1816 Van Buren moved to Albany. In the capitol he could better centralize his political machine and find a larger field for his profession. He was made attorney general

in 1815, and in 1821 became United States senator.

The very year of his entrance into state politics he became a leader. Soon after his advent in Albany, he forsook the Clintonians and joined the Bucktails, and in a few years he had perfected a compact, centralized and obedient party. This party he controlled through the medium of a ring, composed of his most intimate political friends, and the principal office holders at Albany. This group of politicians was called the "Albany Regency," and it became the first political ring to wield a sustained power over New York State politics. The "Regency" controlled patronage, created governors and senators, shaped campaigns, made and unmade local leaders, established newspapers, and, after the death of its great enemy, DeWitt Clinton, ruled the state with the absolutism of a czar, until the advent of the slavery issue obliterated party lines and dethroned the "Regents."

The "Regency" had lieutenants in every county and captains in every town. Its trusted agents kept the leaders constantly informed of the political situation in every locality at all times. So well disciplined was this guard that a word from Van Buren was a command obeyed without question or hesitation. This organization was sustained by the local and federal patronage of the state.

Van Buren was the creator and commander of this political combination. He did for the state what Burr did for the city. When he became supreme in New York he looked toward Washington for greater fields of conquest. To the senate he carried so rare a skill in manœuvre, perfected by experience, that at once he was recognized as the political prince of the nation's capitol.

When he entered Washington there was but one national party; or, more accurately, there was no national party. Federalism had been little more than a sentiment dwelling in the minds of the nationalist, but it had never had a national party organization, as we now use that term. Jeffersonianism had been a counter-sentiment dwelling in the hearts of the decentralizationist, and it had never known compact political discipline. It was the function of the first half century of our history to centralize these sentiments into substance, to give policy an embodiment of party, to endow the spirit with flesh and with bones. After the war of 1812, Federalism was merely a name and Republicanism or Democracy a rampant term, characterizing all degrees of faith, and all manner of issues. The era of good feeling, under Monroe, was but a fatuation. The hope expressed by Jefferson and DeWitt Clinton and John Adams, and Andrew Jackson, and all prominent political personages, that party walls should be forever razed, and



the people of the republic dwell together in a union of sentiment as well as in a union of states, was a vision seen only by dreamers, and possible only in an undiscovered Utopia. For while Federalism and anti-Federalism seemed merged for the moment in the abounding feeling of fraternity and in the unexampled prosperity that succeeded the second peace with England, they contained the germs of two political philosophies so diverse that permanent blending was impossible. To the feeling of nationalism and of sectionalism, to the faith of broad construction and of loose construction, to the aspirations of classes and of masses, there came a tangible reality that evolved out of theory a practical aspect which must find expression at the polls, and alas! on the field of battle. The struggle at the polls was to be fought by non-uniformed armies, as disciplined and enthusiastic as the armies that, in blue and in gray, fought to its bloody sequel the question of the preëminence of state or nation. These battles of the ballots were fought with rancor and with zeal, by partisans who were marshalled into line by political generals, and rallied to the charge, led on by hope of plunder. Fate chose Martin Van Buren to be the first general to organize and command the first compact national political organization.

The time was propitious. The aristocracy that had so long controlled the offices



of state and nation was on the wane. A great influx of immigration had repeopled our cities, and filled the valley of the upper Mississippi with a pioneer population. The artisan of the city, the yeoman of the country, the woodsman of the forest, was clamoring for franchise and power. About the year 1820 a reaction set in against the dynasty of Virginia, the family aristocracy of New York, the oligarchy of New England, and the manorial rulers of the south. The franchise restrictions of the old states were swept aside by new constitutions, appointive offices were made elective, qualifications for office were lowered; the spirit of democracy moved over the troubled waters of American politics.

The era of good feeling came to an abrupt close in 1824. Who should be Monroe's successor? There were no issues. There were personalities. John Quincy Adams, erudite, puritanic, better trained for the place than was any other American who had ever received the vote of the people, was elected president by the House of Representatives after a fierce contest of ill feeling, which had completely obliterated all traces of the good feeling that had preceded. Clay was the real victim of this campaign, for the cry of "bargain and corruption" followed him to his tomb, and prevented the realization of his highest hope. Jackson, stung by defeat, was only spurred to re-

doubled energy. He had received more votes than any other candidate, and was therefore the people's choice. This was his plea, and it was the argument of a true democrat. Crawford, the fourth man in that memorable contest, was incapacitated for service by disease.

The wounds of this fight were never healed. The great personalities that led in the campaign were made the rallying points of definite issues, and in the travail of this bitter struggle were brought forth the embryonic forces which, within one short presidential term, were organized into our first national parties.

This was Van Buren's time. He met the opportunity with an adroitness, a foresight, that is astounding. He laid the plans for his own advancement so carefully and wove them into the tissue of his party with such skill that he stands isolated among American politicians for his prescience and patience.

In the first place, Van Buren measured the power of the populace. He knew that the restless spirit of democracy would burst the bonds of conventionalism and sweep the stilted remnants of English custom and tradition from the capitol. He heard the first faint murmur of the westerners asking for place, impatient of the domination of the coast states. He knew this would be an ever-rising murmur until the clamor there-

of would roll from the Mississippi Valley to the Appalachians, and fill the land with its resounding demands. He led in the triumphant shout that proclaimed the entrance of Andrew Jackson into power, the first real democrat, and the greatest autocrat.

He knew, in the second place, that this free spirit of the frontier must have a candidate, an idol, who must be its incarnation. The candidate must be a personage within whose personality could abide all the virtues of democracy, and all its foibles; hatred of form, disregard for tradition, adoration for decentralization, passion for socializing government, worship of *laissez faire*. The candidate must also be picturesque, for the spirit of the great people is imaginative, rather than practical; the unusual appeals to it. The candidate must be a hero. The commonplace of statesmanship, of daily administrative routine, does not touch the love or the hatred of the masses. Daily duty cannot call to them with inviting accents, but the voice of heroic action secures immediate response. And this hero must be a martyr. The people, like a love-lorn maid, love to pour out their sympathy over the victim of a political plot. The Hero of New Orleans was the personage who possessed in rich degree all these qualifications. He was picturesque, the embodiment of the frontier spirit; he was brave, the victor over Indians and English; he was

a martyr, the victim of Calhoun's jealousy and Clay's coalition.

And, in the third place, Van Buren knew the value of the spoils system as the cement to hold together the structure of his party. He had been schooled in the arts of Burr, and had grown skilled in the management of the Regency and the caucus. He was a master in the science of office distribution.

His entrance into national politics, I have said, was at an opportune time for the display of his singular talents. In the great struggle for the presidency, of 1824, he espoused the cause of Crawford, a citizen of Georgia, a politician of great skill, and a statesman of no mean experience. In thus taking the part of Crawford, Van Buren saw he would not jeopardize his influence with Clay nor his friendship with Jackson. For it was apparent from the outset that Crawford could not reach the White House. There was a strong sentiment in New York for Adams, in 1824. The Regency had no use for the Puritan, because he would not make use of the Regency. He was not a spoilsman.

The congressional caucus, now utterly discredited by those who could not control it, nominated Crawford. Out of 261 members of Congress, only 66 attended, and of these 62 voted for Crawford. So utterly was the ring under the domination of the boss, that the people contemptuously rejected its candidate.

Van Buren began in 1825 to plan for the election of Jackson. He knew that to introduce Jackson sentiment too early in New York would be fatal to the cause. All effusiveness for the hero was stilled. No one nominee was publicly espoused. All were to be encouraged until the day for the pronunciamento should arrive, then the Regency was to marshal the hosts of the common people, Van Buren was to wave his plumed helmet over his head, and become the Navarre of the masses.

Jackson had written a letter to Monroe, in the days of fellowship, saying that since there was no longer any difference between Federalists and Republicans, all appointments should be made on merit alone. This inclined the Federal remnants toward the Hero. Little did they foresee how the taste of power would transform this gentle spirit of non-partisanship into a violent political temper.

In 1827 Van Buren was reëlected to the United States senate. The Clintonians tried to defeat him and elect a friend of Adams. But the Regency showed that their adroit and oily boss "has not counted for or against either of the presidential candidates." The straddle was successful, both for the Senator and the Hero. In his letter to the legislature acknowledging the honor, Van Buren said it would be his "constant and zealous endeavor to protect the remaining rights

reserved to the state by the federal constitution; to restore those of which they have been divested by construction, and to promote the interests and honor of our country." This is state rights, anti-Federal, democratic to the heart.

But the mask of non-committalism that won the Adams men in the legislature was put aside immediately after it had served its purpose, and the cause of Jackson was espoused with great vehemence.

The majority for "Old Hickory" was overwhelming. On the same high tide of Democracy, VanBuren was swept into the governor's chair, although with majorities much below those of the President. The anti-Masons polled 33,335 votes in New York for their candidate for governor, and this reduced Van Buren's majority to merely nominal figures. But Van Buren did not want to remain governor. He sought the office only for the prestige and glory it would bring. He had an understanding that his reward in laboring so skilfully to bring New York to Jackson would be a cabinet office. He resigned his seat in the United States senate to become the governor of New York; he resigned the governor's chair to become secretary of state, all within three months. This was rapid promotion.

Van Buren chose as his successor in the senate Charles E. Dudley, a mediocre man, "not distinguished for vigorous mental



powers," and who would do the exact bidding of his political creator.

Triumphant Democracy entered the nation's capitol with its Hero. Frontiersmen, farmers, hunters, scouts, clad in the regalia of their daily tasks, mingled in picturesque confusion in the nation's city. They came by the thousands, they filled the capitol, they swarmed to the White House, they crowded the streets, they were universal. On the day of the inauguration they hailed their first President with shouts of triumph. John Quincy Adams, in his diary, says that Jackson let them use the White House parlors as a taproom, and that the floors were flooded with the overflow of whisky brought from Kentucky and western Pennsylvania; that the conquerors were conquered by brandy drunk from tin cups and drawn directly from the bunghole, and that they stretched themselves on the White House floors until their drunken stupor had passed off. But Adams was a prejudiced witness and got his tale by hearsay.

But these Huns did proclaim their Attila in a saturnalia of wild delight; they did drive from Washington the disorganized remnants of ancient Federalism; they did snatch the bank of the nation from the hands of its protectors and throw it to the "wildcats;" they did oust Federal officers by the hundreds, only to make place for their own

numbers; they did levy war on national rights and on John Marshall, the upholder of nationalism on the supreme bench; they did write "Rotation in office" on the banners of their party hosts: these and many more things they did, during the reign of the first Democrat.

The administration had started its radical course when the new secretary of state arrived. He soon discerned that peace within the cabinet could not be maintained. The wife of Eaton, secretary of war, was under a social ban. The gallantry of Jackson rushed to her rescue. The cabinet ladies refused to call on her. Van Buren was a widower and had no daughters. He was not embarrassed by the delicacy of the situation and paid the usual social attentions to Mrs. Eaton. This redoubled the attachment the President had formed for his premier. The jealousy of Calhoun completed the rupture in the cabinet. The growing popularity and power of Van Buren made the Philosopher of South Carolina fear lest he should be pushed aside as the successor of Jackson. The President discovered that Calhoun while a member of Monroe's cabinet, favored the recalling of General Jackson from the Florida frontier and placing him in the hands of a court martial. All the violence of Jacksonian wrath was hurled at the head of Calhoun, and he resigned from the cabinet. The Presidency was from that moment forever beyond his reach.

Van Buren was the political manager of the President and of the cabinet. In 1830 the congressional caucus resolved that Jackson should have a second term. Jackson had said, in 1828, that he would take only one term, and had even recommended a constitutional amendment forbidding the reelection of a President. But Van Buren was now manipulating the machine behind the scenes. Van Buren was to be Jackson's successor. He could not have his party machine perfected in 1832, therefore it was necessary to give "Old Hickory" one more term. By early endorsement of Jackson, he would cut off both competition and jealousy—competition against Jackson and jealousy against himself, lest he be accused of trying to become President at the end of Jackson's first term. Calhoun was looked upon by the people as the natural successor to Jackson. He had favored Jackson above Adams as Monroe's successor. But the break-up of the cabinet had abruptly ended Calhoun's chances.

Van Buren was now supreme in his command of the party hosts and his machine was now nationalized. He had dictated federal New York state appointments since his entrance into the senate in 1821. He now advised the President on all prominent national appointments. He had introduced the New York system of rotation in office into the national service, and the first year

of the administration saw 690 officers removed to make way for Democrats of the reigning school; a greater number by three times than all the Presidents preceding Jackson had dismissed. In every state, city and hamlet he had appointed trusted agents to look after the interests of the party. He had created a "Kitchen Cabinet" into a national "Regency," and enthroned it over patronage and policy. He had paved the way for a second term for Jackson and made himself heir apparent to the throne. He had studiously avoided all direct issues that would involve him in entangling alliances with sentiment or conviction. He had taken sides only with the majority. He had fastened himself, through artless guile, courtly demeanor, and skilful intrigue upon the good will of his chief. And finally he had put aside his only competitor for first honors, Calhoun, by making him the open enemy of Jackson.

One thing yet remained. He was known principally as a politician. He needed the halo of national service to complete his fitness for a niche in the gallery of Presidents. A mere politician could not hope to become President, even though he had behind him the strongest political organization the country had known. Nor could, in those days, an unknown man be picked up by a coterie of political schemers and hoisted

to the Presidency. VanBuren's own methods made this possible some years later to his own degradation. It is a true revelation of the character of Van Buren and his arts that seven years as United States senator and three years as secretary of state had not given him sufficient prominence to make him appear to the people of the Union as a national character. Van Buren worked behind the scenes.

He now found a way to nationalize himself. Jackson approved of it. In 1831 he resigned from the cabinet and was at once appointed ambassador to the court of St. James. His appointment took place during a congressional recess. On reconvening the senate refused to affirm the appointment. The debate on the rejection lasted three months. It is the most notable case in our history of the refusal of the senate to concur with the executive in the appointment of a foreign ambassador. The ostensible reason for the unusual action of the senate was the instructions Van Buren as secretary of state had given to his predecessor in London, McLane, pertaining to the attitude of the Jackson administration on the collection of certain American claims against Great Britain. These instructions were made to appear undignified and compromising.

✓ But the true reason for this unusual action was political. Webster refused to vote for the nomination because he thought Van

Buren had appointed himself to the place, and closed his speech as follows: "Mr. President, I have discharged an exceedingly unpleasant duty, the most unpleasant of my public life. But I have looked upon it *as a duty*, and it was not to be shunned. And, sir, however unimportant may be the opinion of so humble an individual as myself, I now only wish that I might be heard by every *independent* freeman in the United States, by the British minister and the British king, and by every minister and every crowned head of Europe, while standing here in my place, I pronounce my rebuke, as solemnly and as decisively as I can, upon this first instance, in which an American minister has been sent abroad *as the representative of his party and not as the representative of his country.*"

Upon the same subject Clay said: "I believe upon circumstances which satisfy my mind that to this gentleman is to be principally ascribed the introduction of the odious system of proscription for the exercise of the the elective franchise in the government of of the United States. I understand that it is the system on which the party in his own state, of which he is the reputed head, constantly acts. He was among the first of the secretaries to apply that system to the dismissal of clerks of his department, known to me to be highly meritorious, and one of them is now a representative in the other house.



It is a detestable system, drawn from the worst period of the Roman Republic, and if it were to be perpetuated, if the offices, honors and dignities of the people were to be put to a scramble to be decided by the result of every presidential election, our government and institutions, becoming intolerable, would finally end in a despotism as inexorable as that at Constantinople.

“Sir, the necessity under which we are placed is painful, but it is no fault of the senate, whose consent and advice are required by the constitution to consummate this appointment, that the minister has been sent out of the United States without their concurrence. I hope the public will not be prejudiced by his rejection, if he should be rejected; and I feel perfectly assured that if the government to which he has been deputed shall learn that he has been rejected because he has, by his instructions to Mr. McLane, stained the character of our country, the moral effect of our decision will greatly outweigh any advantage to be derived from his negotiations whatever they may have been intended to be.”

To this criticism, Marcy, senator from New York, the friend and political intimate of Van Buren, hastened to reply and left on record for all subsequent time the story of the beginning of the national spoils system. Alluding to Clay's attack upon the New York system of robber politics, Marcy replied that

Kentucky practiced the same system, that Van Buren did not originate it in New York, and that Jackson's wholesale proscriptions were justified. "I fear the gentleman does not sufficiently consider the peculiar circumstances under which the present administration came into power. General Jackson did not come in under the same circumstances that Mr. Adams did, or Mr. Monroe. His accession was like that of Jefferson. He came in, sir, upon a political revolution. The contest was without parallel. Much political bitterness was engendered, criminations and recriminations were made. When the present chief magistrate took upon himself the administration of the government, he found almost all the offices, from the highest to the lowest, filled by political enemies. That his cabinet was composed of his friends, no one will complain. The reasons for thus composing it will apply with considerable force to many of the officers under the heads of the several departments.

"It may be, sir, that the politicians of the United States are not so fastidious as some gentlemen are as to disclosing the principles on which they act. They boldly preach what they practice. When they are contending for victory, they claim their intentions of enjoying the fruits of it. If they are defeated, they expect to retire from office. If they are successful, they claim, as a matter of right, the advantages of suc-

cess. *They see nothing wrong in the rule that to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy.*"

The subject of this remarkably frank paragraph is not "some gentlemen" but "the politicians."

Clay replied: "The gentleman from New York [Mr. Marcy] supposes in adverting to the practice of proscription, which I understand prevailed with the dominant party in his state, that I had reflected upon the character of that state. And he alleges that the practice had existed for thirty years with every dominant party and was rigorously exercised many years ago by my friends. Nothing was farther from my intention than to reflect in the smallest degree upon that powerful and respectable state. But I must pronounce my abhorrence of the practice to which I allude, no matter with whom it originated, whether friend or foe, or by whom it may be continued. It has been carried by the present administration to a most odious extent in Kentucky. Almost every official incumbent who voted against the present chief magistrate and who was within the executive's reach has been hurled from office, whilst those who voted for him have been retained, no matter how long they had been in their stations. It is not practiced in Kentucky by the state government when in the hands of the opposition to this administration. Governor Metcalf lately appointed a political opponent to a high office."

This first defense of the spoils system was complete. Marcy's brutal candor has never been excelled. His statement of the philosophy of the spoils politician is perfect. Three quarters of a century of development has not improved upon it. He admitted that to Van Buren and Jackson and all their myrmidons, politics was war upon the public purse, that the people were victims, that their goods and their rights and their safety were "spoils" which legitimately belonged to the "victor." Strangely, the people believed Marcy rather than Clay.

The vote in the senate was purposely made a tie by the pre-arranged absence of a number of anti-Jacksonians so that Calhoun, as president of the senate, might taste sweet revenge on his bitter foe by casting the deciding vote.

Van Buren was recalled. The people received him, not as a rebuked spoilsman, but as a martyr to political jealousy. Democracy was in ferment in every state. The New York legislature, on the instigation of Van Buren himself, sent a letter to Jackson extolling their leader. They had "cheerfully acquiesced in the removal and had freely surrendered their most distinguished fellow citizen," and assured the President that "the state of New York is capable in itself in *avenging* the indignity thus offered to its character, in the person of its favorite son."

The friends of the rejected minister made the most of their opportunity, and paraded their chieftain as a martyr and hero. The citizens of New York said that "the occurrence will leave no other impression than that the arrow has fallen far from its mark, and that the subject at which it was aimed stands unscathed and unhurt." Young men's political clubs sent him long and lachrymose letters. Every Democratic organization in county and city passed resolutions condemning the action. Van Buren answered every one of these communications. He craftily suited style and sentiment to the locality and the people to whom he wrote. He was stilted, flattering, non-committal, obeisant. He made a splendid martyr. He relates in these epistles how he has been "wounded to the quick while absent from home and exerting himself so arduously for his country."

Skilfully and universally was this humiliation of Van Buren made the means of his elevation. Instead of degrading him, the Whigs exalted him.

The first national convention of the Democratic party was held in Baltimore May 21, 1832. The people had already chosen Jackson for renomination. The politicians now chose Van Buren for second place, confident that he would be swept into power by the same hurricane of fervor that would destroy the enemies of the bank. In their

convention they adopted no platform but recommended that in each state the issues most suited to the locality be presented. They hoped to get the vote of eastern Democrats that favored the bank and of western states that asked federal aid for internal improvements. They were at the same moment-strict constructionists in the east and loose constructionists in the west. Under the elastic code of Jacksonianism they could be both Whig and Democrat. Into this non-committal policy their non-committal candidate for Vice-President fitted snugly. Jackson was the real issue and Clay the antagonist. Van Buren was a passive letter writer, a figurehead. The people gave 219 electoral votes to their Hero and only 49 to their Idol.

Van Buren's ambition was no secret. He not only entered the senate chamber as presiding officer, but as a candidate for the succession. Jackson had so willed and daily held counsel with his intimate friend; the politicians had so decreed and perfected the machinery that was to carry out their wish; Van Buren had so planned for twenty years and guarded his words and deeds that he might avoid all offence. Why need the people be asked when such a unanimity of decision prevailed? The people were not asked. When politicians forget to reckon with the people, they plan their own destruction. Machine success is only tempo-



rary, and the builder of this machine was the creator of his own destruction.

For four years Van Buren posed as a candidate. He was duly named in May, 1835, in the second national democratic convention at Baltimore. In this convention sat over 500 delegates from twenty-three states. Maryland sent 183, Tennessee one. But each delegation had only as many votes as its state had in the electoral college. The convention plan had not yet received unanimous sanction, and the president of this convention, Andrew Stevenson of Virginia, devoted most of his speech to an apology of the convention plan and showing its superiority over the congressional caucus. There was no "keynote," no platform, no set of resolutions, and the two-thirds rule of the preceding convention was again adopted.

The south offered its opposition feebly to the convention's choice. Calhoun could not forgive. Soon after the rupture in Jackson's first cabinet, Calhoun was dined in Pendleton, S. C. The usual toast to the President was omitted and one was drunk to Martin Van Buren, with this sentiment: "Oh, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes and with a virtuous visor hide deep vices."

In the convention, however, there was little opposition to him. It was a program convention. Every delegate had been pledged before he was seated, and a motion to pro-

ceed to a nomination was received with a sarcastic smile. But in the south after the convention the opposition was bitter. Van Buren was derided as "secret, sly, selfish, cold, calculating, distrustful, treacherous." Davy Crockett wrote a biography of the candidate full of coarse frontier humor, in which Van Buren was declaimed "as opposite to Gen. Jackson as dung is to a diamond." And Calhoun described the Van Buren men as "a powerful faction (party it cannot be called) held together by the hopes of public plunder and marching under the banner whereon is written 'to the victors belong the spoils.' "

Van Buren accepted the nomination in a rambling, inane letter. The campaign of 18 months dragged on, disorderly, desultory, disheartening. The western Whigs named the unknown William Henry Harrison, the New England Whigs their favorite Webster, and the southern defection named Senator Whiting of Tennessee, a dignified, able and popular statesman.

The slavery issue now first made its appearance in national politics. The abolitionists began their crusade of clamor. Van Buren was asked by a committee from North Carolina: "Do you or do you not believe that congress has the constitutional power to interfere with or abolish slavery from the District of Columbia?" To which he answered at great length, and in equivocal terms, that congress *could not* interfere

with slavery in the states, and that it *better not* in the District.

However, before election the "non-committal" candidate did write a letter in which he for once came out squarely and ably against the bank, for the sub-treasury, for a gradual reduction in the tariff, and against the distribution of the surplus funds among the states. This is the only oasis in that most dreary and long-drawn-out presidential contest.

On the first of November, just preceding the election, a leading New England Whig paper said: "Political knavery was never before carried to such an extent in this country as it has been by Martin Van Buren. To all intents and purposes, on all great national questions, on which all leading statesmen have taken sides, Martin Van Buren is seated on the fence. What confidence can be placed by any party in such a trimmer? He is the professed friend of all factions; in other words, he is not to be trusted by any."

And a few days later the same journal gave the following moderate description of his political methods.

"Van Buren is a second-rate man. He is not only urged by a corrupt faction as a candidate for the presidency, but it is done with such a high hand of dictation, that those who dare oppose him are denounced and abused as though they had committed some unpardonable offense against the govern-

ment. This is a contest between the office-holders and the people. These official agents, including postmasters, are estimated to amount to more than 40,000, scattered all over the country. They derive their means of living from the public treasury, and are totally dependent on the powers that be, for their support. If the existing powers would but tolerate freedom of sentiment and independence in the exercise of their political rights, all would be well. But the misfortune is that the President, at the instigation of Martin Van Buren, has declared a warfare of official extermination against all who have the independence to think and act for themselves. This is so well understood and practiced upon, that every office-holder knows that his official income depends upon his devotion to 'the party.' Hence every placeman, whatever may be his private opinion or wish, becomes a devoted partisan of Van Buren. Martin Van Buren himself stands foremost to set an example of corrupt subserviency."

This reads very much like a description of present-day political methods. In the year in which it was written, it was not a familiar contribution to political literature.

One other contemporary characterization of Van Buren, written at this time, will give the views of the moderate Whigs concerning the Democratic presidential candidate. On November 5, 1836, Alexander E. Everett, a

former United States minister to Spain, wrote a letter for publication. This is his opinion of Van Buren:

“A narrow, sordid, selfish spirit pursuing little ends by little means. No power, depth or reach of mind; no generosity of feeling; no principle or cause, no faith in the existence of such qualities in others. He enters on the high and sacred concerns of government in the same temper in which, as a village lawyer, he sat down to play all comers at the ale house, and is just as ready to employ any trick that will increase his share of the ‘spoils of victory.’ This celebrated phrase, the most unblushing avowal of infamy that was ever made by a public man, characterizes completely Mr. Van Buren and his party.”

Notwithstanding these widespread opinions, Van Buren was elected. Of 283 electoral votes he received 170, and of a popular vote of 1,498,328 he had 762,678. Not an over-whelming majority, and one confined to New England and the Middle States. His own New York gave him 29,000 majority.

Thus entered the White House the first of our presidents who had not been active in the Revolution. The first was he, also, of mere politicians who usurped the place of the statesmen that had graced the highest place in our government since its inception.

It was a noble succession to which he attained. Not in the history of nations has

there been a nobler, abler and more majestic line of rulers than that which exalted our executive office, from the great Cincinnati to the Hero of New Orleans.

Each one has left an imposing monument to his genius. Washington organized the government from the broken fragments of the Confederation. The Father of his Country transmitted to this republic the character of his own personality, its dignity, patriotism and high aspirations. All the virtues of the republic were blended in his genius, and transmitted to all time by the ardor of his services.

The elder Adams was the Puritan statesman whose rugged force resisted the incursions of England and France.

Thomas Jefferson, philosopher and farmer, gave to the nation not only the axioms of the Declaration of Independence, but added a domain of imperial magnitude and unlimited resources to the thirteen states.

James Madison was the father of our federal constitution. Modest and scholarly, he was fitted rather for the bench than for the executive chair. And his quiet nature shrank from the conduct of a bloody war.

James Monroe, gallant, courtly, added the Monroe doctrine to the rules of international conduct.

John Quincy Adams, scholar, diplomat, statesman, administered the duties of the office with vehemence and impartiality.



Andrew Jackson, hero of the multitude, soldier rather than statesman, patriot though partisan, fought with frenzied zeal the bank he believed to be the enemy of the people, and struck from the hand of secession the sword it had lifted against the federal union. His rugged personality has left upon the nation a permanent impress, and so strong was the virility of his convictions that he gave new birth to a national party, and he remains to this day the political sanction of half our peoples.

Now comes Martin Van Buren, machine politician. A man with a marvelous memory for names, a smile for every eye, a clasp for every hand, a nod for every issue. A man who has reduced politics to routine, plunder to a science, and duping the public to an art. A man who masks his littleness behind the greatness of his master, who transforms artifice into reality, who exalts majorities above principles. A man who is the friend of New York's Tammany, founder of the Albany Regency, master mechanic of the first national political machine. This man inaugurates the era of the mediocre, which for a quarter of a century will rule the White House, and transform the national capitol into the duelling ground between the North and South, the enchained and the free: the mediocre executive whose weaknesses and foibles will allow the giants of the hour free combat, and will delay the day of the "irrepressible conflict."

Van Buren knew how to marshal men, but he could not marshal facts. He knew how to use issues, but he could not face issues. The day of his inauguration was the day of his enervation. His inaugural speech was direct and able, a surprise to his friends and a disappointment to his foes. But he could not live up to its prophecy. The politician could not metamorphose into the statesman. The man, who for years had resorted to all the petty tricks of office seekers, could not exalt his office above the meanness of his devices. When Van Buren assumed to play the rôle of statesman, his cunning left him, his vitality departed. His appointments were lamentably weak, such as the naming of Paulding for secretary of the navy. His skill as a leader vanished. He could not hold his party together. And misfortune, that had throughout his long public career been a stranger to him, now called at his door with her troop of melancholy followers. The unwisdom of Jackson's financial measures now became apparent. The whirlwind was reaped by poor Van Buren.

The panic of 1837 desolated every hamlet and brought woe to every home. Want and failure stalked the land. Mills were closed, mortgages foreclosed, whole towns swept off the map, fortunes vanished in a night. Prices became ridiculous, wages were reduced to the starvation point, and profits were the

substance of reverie. No subsequent panic wrought such havoc with the great masses of our people as did the crisis of 1837. The administration had to bear the blame. All the failures of Jackson's rash and insane financial measures were heaped upon Van Buren's head.

Van Buren could not avert disaster, but he faced it with calmness, dignity and bravery. He called a special session of Congress, boldly stated his plan for a sub-treasury system, and devoted himself faithfully to the cause of redemption.

The panic ran its course before the end of his term. But the return of activity could not restore Van Buren to favor. The people visited their own disaster upon their President. They transferred the wild enthusiasm they had bestowed upon Jackson to William Henry Harrison, the Whig candidate, and in a delirium of nervous frenzy, elected the first "unknown" man to the presidency.

It was a furious campaign, fanatical and unreasoning; childish and blind.

Gen. Harrison possessed those rugged traits of character that appealed to the frontiersman and the farmers of the west. Indian fighter, he was the hero of Tippecanoe; coon hunter, he was the woodsman's ideal; dwelling in a log cabin, he was common with the frontiersman; a lover of hard cider, he was not aristocratic; farmer and

stock raiser he was the idol of the agricultural classes; poor, and accustomed to hard toil, he was "one of the people." And he had seen just enough public service as governor of Indiana Territory, and as congressman, to excuse his candidacy in the minds of the eastern Whigs.

The personal characteristics of the candidates were exalted above issues. Van Buren was a "mere politician," Harrison accused him of "electioneering tricks designed by the great enemy of mankind for the destruction of pure government, by preventing a free expression of the public will." Giddings of Ohio called him a "senile dough-face, who had placed the evidence of his senility conspicuously upon the records of his country," and said that his desire for the vote of the slave-dealers was "uppermost in his mind."

The New York *Evening Post* more truthfully portrayed his political methods: "He belongs wholly to the present time, and may be said to represent trading or business politics. He is the very impersonation of party in its strictest feature of formal discipline and exclusive combination."

M. M. Noah, a publicist of some note, said the people "do not see the fox prowling near the barn, the mole burrowing near the ground, the pilot fish who plunges deep into the ocean in one spot and comes up in another to breathe the air." This was pictur-

esque, and more vivid than his description of Van Buren's methods: "His appeal is to the interests and to the fears of men. He secures those whom he imagines control public opinion. He buys the leaders and makes them accountable for the rank and file." Van Buren's political tricks made him known to the public as "the fox," "snake in the grass," "the little magician."

The crisis, of course, was not forgotten in the campaign. It is strange that in their condemnation of Van Buren for breaking the storm, they did not blame for one moment the Sage of the Hermitage for gathering the clouds. They transferred their enthusiasm from Jackson to Harrison. Unreasoning and unfair, they blamed the President for the part he had played in the financial legislation, and meted him no praise for the manly way in which he had faced discouraging conditions and had sought to stem the tide of disaster.

The land was flooded with printed matter. The sedate and labored pamphlets of Federal days were supplanted by silly, and, unfortunately, often scurrilous, slanderous and suggestive matter, put together in a sensational manner and distributed everywhere. The daily paper and weekly magazine had not yet made their universal appearance, and these campaign documents were read with avidity. The reasons why Van Buren should be defeated were enumerated, often

there were one hundred reasons given, most of them trifling, many of them false, and a few slanderous. He was charged with partiality, with party treason, with extravagance, he was elected "purely on the popularity of Jackson." His sub-treasury system was borrowed from Jackson; he was non-committal, underhanded, sly; he should be defeated because "he is too aristocratic, even in his drink, preferring imported champagnes and imperial Tokay to that simple and republican drink, *hard cider*," and "because the majesty of Democracy does not consist in an extravagantly furnished house, magnificent plate, golden spoons and forks, nor any of the tinsel drapery with which monarchy dazzles the eye of its slaves." He should be defeated because Harrison is "simple, democratic, one of the people," and most of all because "*the people want a change.*"

To emphasize the democracy of their candidate, the Whigs exaggerated every token Van Buren had given, of dignity and quiet reserve. A few plated spoons that had found their way to the White House table, a gift of draperies, mantel-mirrors and some paintings that had hung on the walls of the reception hall for many years, were exploited in song and story. The simple and unostentatious hospitality of the President was magnified into Bourbon extravagance.



“His splendid halls are hung about with  
richest tapestry,  
The mirrors bright and paintings rare  
are wonderful to see.  
And there his worship sits in state,  
And rumor’s tongue doth say,  
He quaffs from golden cups, rich wine  
To moisten his old clay,  
Like a sub-treasury gentleman, all of the  
modern time.”

It was a battle of ins and outs, the first of our national contests carried on only for the avowed purpose of party spoils. The Whigs wanted the jobs, the Democrats had the jobs. This was the only issue, and it was concealed behind the mask of personality. The unknown Harrison, rough, rugged and sincere, was set up against the well known Van Buren, suave, rich and designing. The ruse succeeded. Popular feeling was stirred to its depths. Reason and logic found no place in that campaign of hue and cry. Every citizen voted. 900,000 more votes were cast in 1840 than in 1836. Upon the crest of this tidal wave of emotion William Henry Harrison was lifted from the office of county clerk to the office of President of the United States. The White House, in the popular imagination, was supplanted by the log cabin, coonskins took the place of “tapestries rare,” festoons of dried apples and pumpkins suspended from the ceiling,

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and the exhilarating odor of hard cider filled every chamber.

The defeat was crushing. The unknown farmer received 234 electoral votes; the perfect politician only 60. His own state, for the first time in his life, went against Van Buren by 13,300.

He received the verdict with the cool calmness of a man who has long reckoned with political fate. He returned to Kinderhook and began the campaign for reelection in 1844. It was a campaign of letter writing. By the hundreds he sent forth these epistles to his faithful ones in every state. But he was now a deposed chief. There was defection in his own party. The South was determined that the candidate should be pledged to the annexation of Texas. Calhoun's day for revenge was at hand. Van Buren would not yield to the dictation of the slave states and pledge himself to their cause. This was the most manly act of his life. It lost him the nomination but it made him independent.

In the convention of 1844 a majority of the delegates were pledged to Van Buren. But the South was unbending. It came into the hall determined to carry its point. The two-thirds rule that Van Buren had written in 1832, that had reappeared in 1835, and that had been dropped in 1840, was now taken up by the slaveholders as their weapon. They forced it upon the convention. Van Buren

could not hold together two-thirds of the delegates and lost the nomination. He was killed by a weapon of his own forging. James K. Polk, first political "darkhorse," man of mediocrity, obscurity and passivity, was nominated and elected. Over his triumph slave extension ran riot.

Van Buren's return to his beautiful Lindenwald on the Hudson was thus made permanent. In 1848 he crept into notice again as the presidential candidate for the sporadic Free Soil, or American, party, an anti-Catholic, anti-foreign movement pushed forward by some fanatic alarmers. But the frenzy wore off in a few years and the agitation was quite forgotten.

Thus closed the public career of a remarkable politician, who inaugurated a new movement into American politics. The defection in his party began upon his defeat. A letter in the *Democratic Review* of the following year gives such a fair summing up of the man's character that I transpose several paragraphs here. The letter is addressed to Van Buren by "A fellow Democrat":

"In your first candidateship for the Presidency you were the object of no enthusiasm, beyond the limits, perhaps, of your own state. A circumstance connected only remotely with any personal qualities or claims of your own made you Vice-President, your rejection for the English mission by the senate. \* \* Nor did the impulse in

your favor thus called into action by your own very enemies exhaust itself in your elevation to the Vice-Presidency. It placed you at the same time in that position of prominence in the rank of your party which could not fail to indicate you almost as a matter of course as its next candidate. \* \* Your nomination was a matter of course.

“Still through all this your position was comparatively passive. You had done no great deeds to entitle you to this most splendid of political honors, by any right of your own. Your personal claims were of a nature rather negative than positive. A singular fortunate tide of circumstances had borne you forward to the position you had reached, while your talents and the consistent fidelity to Democratic principles, together with the wise moderation of character and the well balanced self-command which had been unostentatiously exhibited throughout the even tenor of your past political life, though but a small portion of it had been spent on the broader stage of national politics, afforded guarantees on which all could rely that the high trust might be safely reposed in your hands. There was thus a general willing acquiescence on the part of Democracy in your elevation, but it was rather of a cold character. The number was far from small, even among those who supported you, who were not free from some distrustful misgivings in

relation to you. A certain impression, the more unfavorable from its very vagueness, prevailed to no slight extent even among your own party that you had rather too much the talent of the politician and too little the genius of the statesman. And never had a President higher reason for pride in the support received by him from his party than that with which you can reflect upon all the circumstances of the great contests from which you are now reposing, defeated but not dishonored. With all the respect and political attachment for you, of which, in your present day of downfall, I have felt no desire to stint the expression, I confess that I am *not* in favor of your name as a candidate for the next election, on the sole and simple ground that you have already had four years of that most splendid of political dignities."

This was breaking the news gently and telling the truth with soft words. It is perhaps the fairest contemporary character sketch of Van Buren.

The defeated candidate returned to his beautiful estate, Lindenwald, and spent the remaining years of his life in the quiet pursuits of agriculture. He lived until 1862, long enough to see the great issue which he had straddled become the menace of the Union. If he cherished the hope that Lindenwald might become a classic name linked to the nation's history with Mount Vernon, Monticello, the Hermitage, and Ashland,

his hope was vain. For Van Buren did not possess those traits of genius that endure. His great contribution to politics, which his eulogist in 1839 glowingly portrayed, namely, that "he carried into full effect, *with exemplary propriety*, that difficult principle of Democracy, *the principle of rotation in office*," has been a muddy source of pollution upon his fame. It is true that in the course of American politics the spoils system was destined to become national, but the man who was principally responsible for the introduction was destined to share in the odium that was heaped upon the system when the days of civil service and civic righteousness dawned.

His fame must rest upon his genius for practical politics. And herein had he no peers. Nature endowed him with all the suave attributes essential to the mixer, the plotter, the designer. His words were honeyed with praise for everyone, his voice was velvet, his greeting hearty, his smile sweet and perpetual, his manner graceful and courteous, his temper yielding, his memory true. While his mind was well stored with general literature, it was constructive only in political plans. For thirty-two years he held office without ceasing, and barring the sub-treasury bill, which he partially borrowed of his great predecessor, he made no noted contribution to American law or American jurisprudence.



He was always first politician, second legislator. When in 1822 Taylor, of New York, was a candidate for reelection as speaker of the house of representatives, Van Buren, then senator, would not support him because he was a Clintonian. This was the boss's ideal of party discipline during the days of Monroe's era of non-partisan good feeling. Of all the applicants for the place, the first and absolutely necessary qualification was obedience to the Regency, the Ring, and the Party. He built his machine of the strongest substance, young men. He welded them together by his kindness and secured their united action by office. Thus he created the Bucktail Democracy of New York with its Regency, and expanded it until it covered the nation as the compact Jacksonian party.

He had studied in a great school of politics. He learned his lesson of intrigue from Burr's associates, his lesson of organization from Burr's Tammany, his lesson of party spoils from Clinton's appointing board.

He began his political career a friend of Clinton, but the austerity of this statesman repelled him. And what a contrast he was to the grave DeWitt, who called him a "grimalkin politician purring over petty schemes." Clinton was a thundercloud, Van Buren radiant sunshine. Clinton blundered forth his animosities, Van Buren kept them to himself. Clinton stumbled on with-

out a party, Van Buren craftily built up a party. Clinton was a statesman proving equal to any great demand put upon him; Van Buren was a politician who had carefully planned a stairway to the Presidency, and when he had climbed it, was found lamentably weak, swept aside by a tornado of protest, and left behind him not one evidence of creative capacity. Clinton, when out of office, was stronger than when in office; Van Buren, when out of office, remained out forever. Clinton was a giant without a party, Van Buren was a pygmy without his machine. Clinton disorganized his following, but created public sentiment; Van Buren organized his following into a superbly disciplined army, but never won the glory of a creator of public sentiment. Clinton stumbled into power because of his genius, Van Buren carefully devised the ladder that led him to the pinnacle of power. These were the rungs of the ladder: Surrogate, State Senator, Attorney General, United States Senator, Governor, Secretary of State, Minister to England, Vice-President, President.

And from this height of power, he fell suddenly into the gloom of mediocrity. Not because of any fault of character, for his private life was spotless and his integrity beyond reproach. But because he forgot the persistence of issues, because he built for to-day and his work crumbled on the mor-

row; because the terraces he carefully erected for his own elevation disintegrated under him and buried him in their ruins; because mere politics is not a basis for lasting fame, and political chicane is not a foundation for enduring eminence.



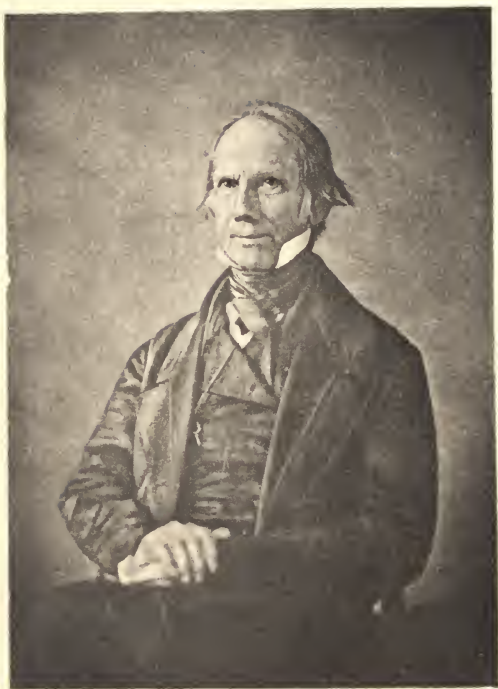
# HENRY CLAY

MASTER AND VICTIM OF COMPROMISE  
AND COALITION









## HENRY CLAY

### MASTER AND VICTIM OF COMPROMISE AND COALITION

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MANY were the expressions of misgiving that accompanied the framing of the national constitution and its adoption. The spirit of nationalism was weak. The thought of a blending of diverse states into a homogeneous union was novel. The spirit of provincialism was powerful. The thought of territorial or sectional security was a habit. But as the new government grew in years and its wise leaders guided it into the realms of security and prosperity, a national sentiment was developed unconsciously as develops the filial love in the bosom of a child. As the revolutionary generation gave way to their sons and daughters, this sentiment increased. The new generation knew not the colonial passions of their fathers. They knew a United States, not a warring strip of thirteen colonies. The patriotic devotion to the Union was not throbbing with that ardor which we know and feel. While the sun of nationalism was showing its beaming face, it was yet a rising sun. Fierce and terrible must be the struggle ere it could shine full

and resplendent upon a nation united in sentiment as in law.

It was the mission of our first century to evolve this spirit of unionism out of the germs of sectionalism; to transform the confederation into a union. This could be accomplished only after a ponderous economic barrier had been leveled, after great leaders had vainly attempted through compromise and coalition to avert the calamity of fraternal war. The insurmountable economic barrier was slavery; union sentiment was partially crystalized in the Whig party; and the brilliant leader of that party was Henry Clay, "The Great Pacificator." Through his trinity of compromises he delayed the inevitable struggle; through his political genius he formed the first coalition party in America; through his burning eloquence and winning generosity he brought all men to his feet, and his very greatness closed for him the portals to the dearest object of his ambition.

The first storm broke in 1818-20 over the admission of Missouri. The nation, reposing in the calm self-assurance that all was well, was suddenly shaken by a political earthquake that threatened to demolish the structure of its government. / The north, since the revolution, had been content to develop its commerce and manufactures, paying little heed to the economic conditions of the south. The west was in the

midst of a vigorous and unprecedented growth, the south was learning the value of slave labor as an adjunct to the cotton gin of Whitney and the mills of England. Each section was economically oblivious of the others. When Missouri came, inadvertently asking admission to the group in March, 1818, she called the attention of the whole nation to the subject of slavery. By the time that a statehood bill had been formulated, February 13, 1819, the north, through Tallmadge of New York, was prepared to move that the introduction of slavery be prohibited and that all persons in the state be free when they attained the age of twenty-five years. The gauntlet was thrown, the challenge accepted, the struggle was fierce and passionate, its outcome was doubtful until compromise was achieved.

The interests of the south were cloaked under the constitutional argument that congress had no power to limit the admission of a state, under the economic argument that white men could not work in the cotton fields, under the moral argument that slavery was better for the negro than freedom in a land where white and black had to dwell together. The answer of the north was that the constitution did not recognize slavery and that the constitutional power of the general government to exclude slavery from territories implied the power to dictate terms of admissions; that slavery was a

great moral wrong, and that it was an economic blight, degrading free labor wherever it appeared. These arguments were rephrased and amplified in every slavery debate for forty years. But this, the first great debate on the subject, remained the prototype of all; and in its bitterness it was not excelled by any.

On February 16, 1819, the House passed the Missouri bill with an amendment restricting slavery. The senate struck out the amendment and sent the bill back. Attempts at adjustment failed, the fifteenth congress adjourned under tremendous excitement. When the sixteenth congress met, the senate coupled the admission of Maine with that of Missouri, to preserve the balance of power in the senate. An amendment prohibiting slavery was voted down.

On January 18, 1820, Senator Thomas, of Illinois, proposed an amendment that Missouri be allowed to frame a constitution without any restriction as regards slavery, but that in all the rest of the territory ceded by France to the United States, north of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , the southern boundary of Missouri, slavery be forever prohibited. This was the core of the famous compromise. After a fierce struggle between the interests of the south and the sentiment of the north, it passed both houses. Clay, as speaker of the house, had opposed the admission of Missouri as a free state, but he warmly ad-

vocated the compromise. He was not its father, but its champion. He was yet to prove its savior.

The question was revived with multiplied energy in the next session. The bill authorizing Missouri to form a state constitution without restricting slavery had been most narrowly interpreted by the territorial convention. For the new state constitution imposed upon the legislature the duty of passing laws making it unlawful for any free negroes or mulattoes to come into the state or to reside therein. Free negroes and mulattoes were citizens of the United States, and how could one state prohibit the citizens of another from sojourning and living therein, when the federal constitution guaranteed that the immunities of one state should extend to all? 3

The war was waged simultaneously in both houses. The senate, December 12, 1820, by a majority of eight, passed an amendment to the motion admitting Missouri providing "that nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to give the assent of congress to any provision of the constitution of Missouri, if any there be, that contravenes that clause of the constitution of the United States that the citizens of each state be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states." In the house, Lowndes of South Carolina introduced a resolution admitting Missouri on the



ground that congress had no right to discard the state constitution. Sergeant of Pennsylvania replied that congress had not divested itself of the right to scrutinize the new state constitution, to see if it conformed to the conditions stipulated. A majority of fourteen refused the admission of Missouri. So tense was the excitement that Lowndes earnestly asked the house to take proper steps to preserve peace in Missouri. Six weeks later, January 24, 1821, Eustis of Massachusetts moved to admit Missouri on condition that she strike out the clause from her constitution, discriminating against free colored persons. The motion was utterly lost, by a vote of 146 to 6. The house was helpless and discouraged, threats of disunion were heard on every hand. A rebellious territory was holding up a great nation.

A peace-maker was at hand. He grasped anew the smoldering torch of union sentiment and fanned it into a living blaze. Upon the turbulent waters of strife he poured the assuaging oil of compromise. He appeared upon the scene at the critical moment. Pressure of financial cares had compelled him to resign the speakership at the end of the preceding session. He had arrived in Washington only a week before the introduction of Eustis' resolution. When the vote was announced, he arose at once and broke the solemn stillness that weighed down the hearts of the members, by calmly

announcing that "on the day after to-morrow he should move to go into committee of the whole to take into consideration the resolution from the senate on the subject of Missouri."

All efforts to reach an agreement in the committee of the whole failed. In order to bring these men together, the conciliator must find a base upon which could stand most violent pro-slavery men who would rather keep their slaves than their country, most intense anti-slavery men who would rather dissolve the constitution than relax their high moral standard, and all varieties of faith in between these extremes. At last Clay moved to refer the whole matter to a special committee of thirteen. Clay was made chairman. On February tenth, his report was laid before the expectant House. To the north it proposed to admit Missouri "on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatever, upon the fundamental condition that the said state shall never pass any law preventing any description of persons from coming to and settling in the said state, who now are, or hereafter may become, citizens of any of the states of this union." To the south it said that nothing in the proposal should "be construed to take from the said state of Missouri, when admitted into this union, the exercise of any right or power which can now be constitutionally exercised by any of the original

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See  
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states." And to take the matter out of congress it resolved that Missouri should become a state as soon as its legislature, by solemn pact, had agreed never to pass any laws imposing upon the constitutional rights of any citizen.

Clay appealed in his most ardent and winning tones to the members of the House. His appeal was futile. On February 13th the resolution was voted down. A crisis was near. On February 14th, Monroe's electoral votes were to be counted. Should Missouri's vote be counted? A joint committee, Clay at the helm, reported "that if any objection be made to the votes of Missouri, and the counting or omitting to count which shall not materially change the election, in that case they should be reported by the President of the Senate in the following manner; were the votes of Missouri to be counted, the result would be for A. B. for President of the United States—votes, if not counted, for A. B. as President of the United States—votes, but in either case A. B. is elected President, and in the same manner for Vice President." What good fortune that Monroe's choice was virtually unanimous, and his Vice President, Tompkins, had an overwhelming majority!

But this did not end the Missouri question. The end of the session was nearing. The whole country was agitated. The dissolution of the Union was freely and openly dis-

cussed. James Barber, of Virginia, patriotic and able, earnestly planned a convention of free and slave states to agree on a plan of dividing the union. Floyd, of Virginia, had cried, when the counting of the presidential votes was in progress, "We cannot take another step without hurling this government into the gulf of destruction." John Randolph, whose fiery antagonism to the anti-slavery men had estranged him even from Clay, who was himself a slave-owner, approached Clay one day and said: "Mr. Speaker, I wish you would leave this chair; I will follow you to Kentucky, or wherever else you may go." Clay replied that he would talk it over with him the following morning in the speaker's room, at which time Clay strongly spoke against secession in any form, and pleaded moderation. Clay himself was often gloomy and expressed grave apprehensions. In one of his foreboding moods he foretold that in a few years the Union would probably be divided into three divisions, a northern, southern, and western. John Quincy Adams, old anti-slavery war horse, while in favor of a compromise, wrote: "Perhaps it would have been a wiser as well as a bolder course to have persisted in the restriction upon Missouri, 'til it should have terminated in a convention of the states to amend and revise the constitution. This would have produced a new Union of thirteen or fourteen states,

unpolluted with slavery, with a great and glorious object to effect, namely, that of rallying to their standard the other states by the universal emancipation of their slaves. If the Union must be dissolved, slavery is precisely the question upon which it ought to break."

And from Monticello came the alarming words of Jefferson, the sage of the dominant party: "The Missouri question is the most portending one that ever threatened the Union. In the gloomiest moments of the Revolutionary War, I never had any apprehension equal to that I feel upon this source."

These sentiments of disunion were rapidly shaping themselves into definite form as the end of the session neared. Clay's final resort was a joint committee to report "whether it be expedient or not to make provision for the admission of Missouri into the Union, and fix the execution of the laws of the United States within Missouri, and if not, whether any other and what provision, adapted to her condition, ought to be made by law." Clay was permitted to make the list from which the committee was chosen. On February 28 the report was ready. It was virtually the same that Clay's committee of thirteen had previously presented to the house. By a majority of four it passed the house, the senate also approved it. The struggle in congress was at an end.

Clay had earned his title. He had gone from member to member, suiting his plea to his man. Personal work and public address, parliamentary management and political craft, were made the adjuncts of his luring eloquence. Every guile known to a warm heart, all the compelling powers of genius, did he pour unstintingly on the altar of his compromise.

Who was this great "Pacificator," and what had been his antecedents, that he could reunite a dividing nation, and infuse new life into a dying cause?

Clay was forty-four years old when his compromise won for him a lasting place in the hall of fame. But it was by no means his first great public achievement. He had been twenty years in the public eye. Indeed, for Henry Clay to speak, was for a nation to listen; for him to beckon, was for a populace to follow. He had but to rise in his place, and the republic's gaze was centered upon him.

Clay was destined by gift and circumstance to be a public man. For nearly half a century, from the time of his majority to the day of his death, he was always an actor upon the political stage, and most of the time he was the star actor.

He was born in Hanover County, Virginia, in a neighborhood called "The Slashes," on April 12, 1777, the year after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. His



life spanned that period of our history which fixed forever the supremacy of the nation over the commonwealth.) As a babe, he heard the guns of the Revolution, as an old man of seventy-six years, he heard the ominous rumbling that foretold the gathering of the storm his energies had so long averted.

His father was a Baptist minister, poor in earthly goods, but rich in faith and character and eloquence, known throughout the countryside for his fine voice and natural grace of speech. His mother was a woman of queenly bearing and of intense patriotism. In Henry were happily blended these gifts of eloquence, of spiritual force, of regal demeanor, and of love for country. But the school in which these talents were cultured was the liberal school of life, for beyond his instruction received at home and in the little country school-house, he received no formal tuition. His father died when Henry was only four years old, the family was large, and he had to give his small aid to its support. At the age of fifteen he secured a place in the office of the clerk of the High Court of Chancery, in Richmond, and there, under the tuition of Roland Thomas, the senior clerk, he received his formal training for his new duties. The diligence and wit of the raw youth soon attracted the attention of Chancellor Wythe of the Court of Chancery. This was the most fortunate circumstance in Clay's early life. The Chan-

cellor was a rare man. His college education he had supplemented by wide reading and large experience. His revolutionary record was brilliant. He drew up a remonstrance against the stamp act, he signed the Declaration of Independence, he helped formulate the Federal Constitution. His mind was profound and well trained. For ten years he was Professor of Jurisprudence in William and Mary College. His disposition was benevolent, he emancipated all his slaves and provided for them. He loved young men, and took delight in directing their reading. Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence, John Marshall, the upholder of the constitution, Henry Clay, the conciliator, all had been students in his office. What a trinity of talent did Chancellor Wythe foster for his country! And the youngest among them was not the least. 4

At the age of twenty-one, young Clay was admitted to the bar. Impatient at once to gain a large practice, he resolved to remove to the new country, so to Lexington, Kentucky, he migrated, and cast his fortune into the lap of the west. And the west was kind to him. His exuberant nature fitted into her limitless forests, his free and easy grace found ready favor in her unconventional towns, his high spirits were in consonance with her love of adventure, and the kingly grace of his demeanor, devoid of all hauteur, appealed to her love of the distinguished. A 3

Clay was born to be the hero of such a country and the leader of such a people. He was at home among them. His peculiar talents were complementary to their curiosities. A show of learning they esteemed more than profound scholarship, and Clay's reading had always been wide but not deep. Eloquence they placed above logic, and young Clay practiced with religious diligence in the field, the forest, and the barn, the art that won him a willing hearing wherever he went. Not a day passed without his reciting some piece he had committed to memory. And the smile, the jovial handshake, these people of the west desired above the formal manners of eastern society. Clay was widely read, was eloquent, was a good fellow. From the first his success was assured. Competence and popularity were soon in his control.

Two years after his arrival he was made a member of the convention to revise the state's constitution. He introduced a clause providing for the emancipation of the slaves in the state. Clay's natural impulses were always generous. By nature, he was an anti-slavery man. Slavery was merely an expedient with him. Political contingencies later in life carried him far beyond the convictions of his youth, to the lasting harm of his supreme desire.

Clay rendered brilliant service in the state legislature, and in 1806 was appointed to

serve an unexpired term in the United States senate. He was the youngest member ever received into that august body, for he lacked three months and seventeen days of being thirty years old. It is remarkable that no objection was interposed to his taking the oath. The first speech made by the young senator was prophetic of the obedience his oratory would command. It advocated the building of a bridge across the Potomac. And his first bill foretold one of the great issues he would espouse. It provided for the building of a canal around the rapids of the Ohio river. The boy orator was from the first a champion of internal improvement.

His term in the senate lasted only a few months, but in 1809 he was again appointed to fill a two-year vacancy. At once he assumed the floor leadership in the great debate in the Florida question.

But a more important contest was at hand. He changed the scene of his activities from the senate to the house, to which he had been elected in 1811, and the subject of his combat from the intrusions upon Florida to the indignities offered American seamen by European frigates. Clay was now thirty-four years old and the chief of the aggressive Jeffersonian Republicans. His incomparable parliamentary talents required no apprenticeship. He was immediately and gladly accepted as leader, and forthwith

elected speaker. This is perhaps the only instance in our history where a young man was accorded this unusual honor in the very first term of his service in the national house.

The issues of a war with Great Britain were peculiarly alluring to Clay, and his environment in the house lent every aid to his talents. The old generation had mostly passed away. Young men, who did not carry arms against England in the War for Independence, were thronging public life. These young men, ardent in love, intense in hate, unbounded in ambition for their country, were Clay's associates. The conservative east no longer monopolized opinion and controlled action. A young and spirited west had crossed the nation's threshold and took its place beside its elders in the councils of the land. Clay was the incarnation of this restless spirit of growth. His luxuriant imagination thrived on the contemplation of his country's future. He loved action, and despised contemplation. Impulse, rather than reason, led him on. Patriotism was to him an instinct as powerful as the instinct of self-preservation. With intense passion he hurled himself into the arena.

Josiah Quincy was the leader of the Federalists who opposed war. He called Clay and his adherents "very young politicians, their pin feathers not yet grown, and, however they may flutter on this floor, they are



not yet fledged for any high or distant flight, who think that threats and appealing to fear are the ways of producing any disposition to negotiate in Great Britain or in any other nation which understands what it owes to its own safety and honor." The young patriot's pin feathers may not have been fledged but his powerful beak was fully developed and perfectly capable of tearing Quincy's terrific arraignment limb from limb. The Federalists laid themselves open to the severe charge of being unpatriotic. This was the lofty theme of Clay's reply. And no other theme could play upon the gamut of his talents, as could this one. It swept every chord of imagination, of argument, of passion, of invective, of appeal. Its inspiring words resounded through the whole country. He closed by saying that "an honorable peace is attainable only by an efficient war. My plan would be to call out the ample resources of the country, give them a judicious direction, prosecute the war with the utmost vigor, strike wherever we can reach the enemy, at sea and on land, and negotiate the terms of peace at Quebec or at Halifax. We are told that England is a proud and lofty nation, which, disdain-  
ing to wait for danger, meets it half way. Haughty as she is, we once triumphed over her, and if we do not listen to the councils of timidity and despair, we shall again prevail. On such a cause, with the aid of Providence,



we must come out crowned with success. But if we fail, let us fail like men, lash ourselves to our gallant tars, and expire together in one common struggle, fighting for free trade and seamen's rights."

The war was almost a failure. Clay was permitted to help gather the harvest his war had reaped. Together with John Quincy Adams, Bayard, Jonathan Russell and Albert Gallatin, he was sent to Ghent to negotiate a peace. It was a miserable harvest that they garnered. The war was virtually barren of substantial results. To Clay's political ambitions it was laden with apples of Sodom. The battle of New Orleans, fought after the truce had been announced, like a child born out of season, gave to the nation a war hero, Andrew Jackson. Three times he stood between Clay and the White House. Thus did the war, the creation of Clay's fervor, bring forth a hero, the destroyer of Clay's ambition.

Upon his return to the United States, Clay was immediately reelected to congress. The president offered him the ambassadorship to Russia, and the war portfolio, but he preferred to be speaker. The years that followed were years of plenty. The era of good feeling was an era of commercial and territorial development. To Clay it offered an opportunity to exploit his great program of internal improvements, the tariff, and a national bank. These policies were

inspired by his vast conception of the future of America, and illumined by the burning ardor of his patriotism. Turnpikes and canals were to bind the states into closer communion, protective duties were to foster infant industries, a national bank was to afford security against private chicane and public rashness. During these years he also espoused the cause of the South American countries which were struggling for their liberties. His lukewarm attitude toward the administration was converted into enthusiasm by the Monroe doctrine. In all of these causes he was the leader. His magnificent voice was heard in every debate, his skill directed every movement.

The era of good feeling came to a sudden end by the Missouri controversy, which lifted the ghastly spectre of slavery into full view and made Henry Clay the leader of the nation's hope.

It is remarkable how soon the people apparently forgot the significance of this struggle. The day before the final vote on the compromise, they were threatening each other with destruction. The day after they locked arms in the joyful procession of peace. But upon the politics of the day the slavery debate made a lasting impression. The Missouri question was the first rude shock given to our political retort, and it set in motion the invisible particles of political conviction which ultimately crystallized into

new parties. From that time forth the political molecules were rearranging themselves about the central axes of slavery and emancipation. It took several decades to perfect the realignment. The transition period was one of coalition, of makeshifts, of expedients. It was the period of Whigism.

In 1823, after a brief voluntary retirement from public life, Clay was returned to the house and at once made speaker. The Kentucky legislature in November, 1822, had nominated him for the presidency. It was then, as a presidential candidate, that he assumed the speakership. From this time forth there were two Henry Clays. One, Clay the statesman, the other, Clay the presidential candidate. The one always stood in the way of the other. That glittering, iridescent bubble, the presidential office, floated constantly before his vision.

Yet his first campaign for the high office was his best. He kept his ambitions well within control. He avoided all dualism, and appealed to the confidence of his fellow-citizens by the earnest and outspoken advocacy of great causes. And his causes were internal improvement and the tariff. With winning voice and gorgeous imagery he portrayed the development of our vast resources.

The severest struggle of the session was on his tariff measure. He made one of the

greatest speeches of his life in defense of his bill. It was a wonderful debate. Daniel Webster and Henry Clay opposed to each other in the arena of appeal and argument, would call forth all the cohorts of logic and eloquence. Clay was the erratic, brilliant, flashing lightning, Webster the lowering, dark visaged storm. Clay cleverly reinforced his arguments with an appeal to patriotism, a favorite resort of orators, by christening his protection policy "The American System," as opposed to the opposition policy, "The Foreign System." "American" versus "Foreign," could be understood by the multitude who had the ballot. This debate added to Clay's swelling popularity. He was prepared for the campaign.

There was nominally only one party, and it presented four candidates to the people.

First in political intrigue and that peculiar sagacity required of the simon-pure politicians, stood Crawford. He had an inflated reputation for greatness, which suddenly collapsed when the ballots were counted. History can do no greater service to his memory than to say he ran against Adams and Clay. Second in the list was Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, grim, unrelenting, always in a fight with some one, the first military chieftain who had dared to present himself as a candidate for the Presidency. Third, came John Quincy Adams,



who, through a long life of continuous and conspicuous public service had prepared himself for the high office he sought. His were the cold austerity of the Puritan, the distant formality of the scholar, the private virtues of the purist. And finally, Henry Clay, the ardent, impulsive impressionist, the son of the boundless west, whose glowing sun had touched his life with a redolent glow, and whose limitless acreage had inspired in him a faith in his country that knew no limitations. Clay was not only popular, he was great. He was not only an incomparable orator, he was an adroit politician. He was not merely the painter of fantasie, he was also the builder of causes.

Crawford had been nominated by the caucus, the machine. He was the "regular" candidate. Adams was put forward by New England. He was the old-fashioned candidate. Jackson was nominated by a few political henchmen, who thought they could use his military reputation for their own gain. He was the hero candidate. Clay was named by his state, and by Ohio and Missouri. He was the people's candidate.

Jackson and Crawford made active canvasses for the election. Jackson's candidacy and campaign is a singular example of how the public can be led into hero worship; how a candidate can be built up, like a brick house, piece by piece, of inconsider-



able particles, and presented as a finished product to a wondering multitude. To Major Lewis, of Tennessee, Jackson owed the architecture of his candidacy. There never lived a more astute political manipulator. He knew all the little doubtful tricks of politics, and the gullibility of the people. The story of his treatment of Jackson's case is more akin to romance than to history.

Adams made no canvass. It was far beneath him to intrigue for office and especially the highest office in the land. He would not even coöperate with his friends to aid his election. Clay did encourage his friends to work for him, but he scorned to use any other means to help himself.

It was not a campaign of issues, for there were none. The discussion centered around the candidates. Thus it became a campaign of personalities. Adams wrote: "It seems as if every liar and columniator in the country was at work day and night to destroy my character." All candidates were subject to like infamy and scandal. It would have been surprising if, under the circumstances, any one of the quartette had received a majority. There was no popular choice. Jackson had 99 electoral votes, Adams 84, Crawford 41, Clay 37. The House of Representatives had to choose between the highest three. The buoyant disposition of Clay was deeply hurt because he was not one of the three. To add to the bit-



terness of defeat, it was rumored that he had been cheated out of five votes in Louisiana by a dastardly trick in the legislature. This would have given him precedence over Crawford.

From president-seeker he was now transformed into the more powerful president-maker. His wish would determine who should receive his electoral votes and become President. Consequently he became the most sought and most lauded man in Washington. Even petulant Jackson forgot the Florida episode and warmed up to his erstwhile enemy. But Clay had made up his mind as soon as the votes had been counted. There was only one thing for him to do. He could not vote for Crawford, now a paralytic. Nor for Jackson, whose qualifications he thought lay alone in his military prowess. "I cannot," he wrote to Francis Brooke, "consent in this early stage of their existence, by contributing to the election of a military chieftain, to give the strongest guaranty that the Republic will march in the fatal road which has conducted every other republic to ruin." And to Blair: "I cannot believe that the killing of 2,500 Englishmen at New Orleans qualifies for the various difficult and complicated duties of the chief magistracy."

When the Jackson men began to suspect this, they tried to frighten Clay into doing their bidding. The election was set for

February ninth. On January twenty-eighth, a Philadelphia paper printed a letter from Washington in which it was specifically asserted that Clay and Adams had entered into a bargain, whereby Adams was to make Clay secretary of state in return for Clay's votes. The high-spirited Clay answered by a public note in which he denounced the writer as a "base and infamous calumniator, and dastard and liar," and challenged him to a duel. It turned out that George Kremer, of Pennsylvania, was the writer of the note. Now, this Kremer was one of your insignificant, illiterate, impecunious runts, who occasionally get sent to Congress. He was known in Washington by the many colors of his coat, and was perfectly capable of being made the tool of villainy. Of course, when the writer was disclosed, the humor of the occasion drew the laugh on the haughty Clay. But there was more tragedy than humor in the event. Clay withdrew his challenge on the floor of the house, and asked for an investigating committee. The frightened simpleton backed down, and asked Clay if a retraction would be sufficient. Clay said "No; the affair is now in the hands of the committee." On the very day the votes were to be counted, the committee reported that Kremer had sent in a letter refusing to testify.

History has revealed that the dolt Kremer was used as a cat's-paw by the unscrupulous

Lewis, and by Senator Eaton, of Tennessee, the Jackson managers. They had written the letter to the Philadelphia paper, they had been disconcerted by Clay's appeal to the house; they then wrote the letter to the committee, Kremer willingly signing their literary lies.

Thus did the wicked imaginings of two coarse and utterly unscrupulous politicians give birth to a canard, a campaign lie that haunted a great and good man to his grave. For the cry of "bargain and corruption," was raised whenever Henry Clay was a candidate for the Presidency. He could not explain it away, he could not live it down. Such is the vitality of a popular lie. Such the degradation of politicians, and such the simplicity of the people.

Clay was always adverse to bargains. They were not part of his political machinery. He had written to Francis Brooke early in 1833: "On one resolution my friends must rest assured I will firmly rely, and that is, to participate in no intrigues, to enter into no arrangements, to make no promises or pledges, but that, whether I am elected or not, I will have nothing to reprove myself with."

That he fully lived up to this admirable resolution is true. But he also gave color to the cry of bargain, when he accepted the secretaryship of state under the new President. Then did his enemies point their

gaunt fingers at him and cry: "I told you so."

The traditions of the House of Representatives give to Clay the first place among its galaxy of noted speakers. For fourteen years, excepting several inconsiderable interruptions, he had presided continuously over its deliberations. Never had one of his decisions been reversed. Through the tumult of the Florida episode, the rancor of the Missouri controversy, the turmoil of tariff and internal improvement debates, he guided the affairs of the house with calm and steady hand. Absolute self-possession, exact knowledge of parliamentary laws, promptness in decision, dignified courtesy and universal impartiality united to make him a great speaker. He made an ideal parliamentarian, and he knew it. With reluctance did he give up the congenial role of speaker to assume the irksome duties of secretary of state. To Brooke he writes: "I have an unaffected repugnance to any executive employment, and my rejection of the offer, if it were in conformity with their [his friends'] deliberate judgment, would have been more compatible with my feelings than its acceptance."

During the four years of his premiership the political alignment that had been made inevitable by the stirring events of the previous decade took visible form. There was

no issue around which these diverse elements would rally. The one Great Issue was avoided by both. So men, not causes, became the nuclei of the new political concretions. Issues were evolved later. Indeed, at this formative period, all the leaders professed to believe about the same thing. Jackson had written a letter in 1824, affirming his faith in protection; he had not appeared hostile to the bank, and had voted for some internal improvements.

The differentiation of issues was inevitable, however, because two elements hostile in philosophy were lurking behind the political leaders. The Great Issue was fought out on the question of Nationalism versus Sectionalism. The political philosophy that underlay the issue was state rights versus federal rights, and the constitutional philosophy that supported these diverse views was strict construction versus loose construction. A believer in slavery would naturally be a state-rights man, and a strict constructionalist. A believer in slavery restriction placed the union above the state, nor could he deem a narrow adhesion to the constitution a virtue.

But neither political philosophy nor constitutional theories are the motives that prompt a people to action. They do not think so deeply. More superficial must be the motive that will arouse them to action. The profound depths of national conviction that in the lapse of years determine a na-



tion's destiny, are not apparent to the superficial observer or the hysterical ballot vendor. But the great depths support the tumultuous waves of the surface, they bear on their bosom the onward sweep of resistless tides. The petty frothings of an hour, the selfish passions of party leaders, the cruel superficiality of the unthinking are but trivial events in the majestic progress of the tide of self-government.

It is decreed that to give practical aspect to a political movement, there must be a personality to rally the fancies and passions of the people; there must be a slogan to please their ears and deceive their understanding into the belief that it represents a profound issue. But in the end, the people will be right. It took nearly a century to fight out the Great Issue. It was dodged, evaded, avoided, until the fullness of time arrived, then it was settled.

We will trace the political events that led almost to this consummation.

On October 13, 1825, Jackson resigned from the senate and accepted the nomination for President tendered him by the legislature of Tennessee. Thus he began a three years' campaign. His platform was "The corruption of the Adams administration," his slogans were "Bargain and corruption," and "Turn the rascals out!" His motive was no doubt sincere, but it assumed the shape of vindictive revenge.



It was not long before opportunity offered itself to bring the Jackson partisans upon the constitutional theory which was their true platform. President Adams earnestly advocated internal improvements. As a matter of course his enemies opposed him. This raised the issue of the constitutionality of his recommendations. He said that it is implied in the constitution that the government has plenary power to develop our national resources. He was answered that what powers were not definitely delegated to the national government reposed with the various states. Thus the leopard showed his spots.

The struggle between congress and the administration grew daily in bitterness. Vindictive John Randolph, the viper of Virginia, called the administration "the coalition of Bilfel and Black George, the combination, unheard of till then, of the Puritan with the Black Leg." Clay indiscreetly challenged Randolph to a duel for this public slander. The Virginian shot into the air, Clay put a hole through Randolph's coat. Benton then brought about a formal conciliation.

While the opposition had settled themselves upon the constitutional formula of strict construction, they by no means abandoned the popular method of warfare. Their harangues upon the constitutionality of internal improvements did not interest the

people. Again and again did they dig open the grave of "bargain and corruption," after Clay and his friends had thought they had buried the slander deep, effectually and forever. The shroud was unwound and the ghastly decaying corpse displayed to full view. Sight and stench were to drive the people into a frenzy. And the politicians succeeded.

Jackson himself now believed the lie. On his way from congress, in 1824, he was greeted at Washington, Pa., by a group of admirers. One of them, an aged farmer, said to him: "Well, General, we did all we could for you here, but the rascals at Washington cheated you out of it." Jackson replied: "Indeed, my old friend, there was cheating, and corruption and bribery, too." When Jackson's faith once gripped an idea it never let go.

As the canvass between Adams and Jackson advanced, the fury and frenzy of the politicians increased. The stump reeked with slander. Letters and pamphlets fell over the land like snowflakes. David Trimble wrote a dissertation of forty pages, reviewing the evidences of the slander. And people read those things. Floyd, of Virginia, told his constituents they were "now engaged in a great war, a war of patronage and power against patriotism of the people." How strange this alliteration reads in the light of the Jackson reign of proscription!

Day after day, line upon line, the Jackson press reiterated in staring headlines the cry of "Bargain and Corruption," until it seemed the people should have turned, nauseated by the sight.

The debates in congress were turned into the most scurrilous stump speeches.

This strange campaign of no issues was fought with weapons of slander and prejudice.

Its outcome was significant of the profound changes that had come over the Republic since the days of Federalism. Jackson received 178 votes, Adams 83. Clay, not Adams, was the center of attack. He could not move in any capacity without being preëminent. Yet the crushing results of the election, while they dismayed him for the moment, did not veil the presidential office from his gaze. Before he retired from the cabinet he made inquiry of Edward Everett whether New England would support him in 1832. Restless spirit that possessed his soul, like a never satiated wanderlust.

On his way home from Washington, Adams spoke these words for his secretary of state:

"Upon him the foulest slanders have been showered. The department of the state itself was a station which, by its bestowal, could confer neither profit nor honor upon him, but upon which he has shed unfading

honor by the manner in which he has discharged his duties. Prejudice and passion have charged him with obtaining that office by bargain and corruption. Before you, my fellow citizens, in the presence of our country and heaven, I pronounce that charge totally unfounded. As to my motives for tendering him the department of state, when I did, let the man who questions them come forward. Let him look around among the statesmen and the legislators of the nation and of that day. Let him then select and name the man whom, by his preëminent talents, by his splendid services, by his ardent patriotism, by his all embracing public spirit, by his fervid eloquence in behalf of the rights and liberties of mankind, by his long experience in the affairs of the Union, foreign and domestic, a President of the United States, intent only upon the honor and welfare of his country, ought to have preferred to Henry Clay."

This was the best praise Clay ever received. For Adams was not given to exuberance and he was as critical as he was scrupulous. But the people would not believe even John Quincy Adams.

The antagonistic elements were now completely separated. The Jacksonians, united by victory and under the sway of a political despot, presented the front of a real party. Three years of perfect party discipline had ranged them into compact ranks. They

had everything to make a party except issues. They had a leader, they had an organization, they had a victory, and with such a leader as theirs they were not long in finding a cause.

There were now in reality two parties, but each claimed to be the genuine old Republican or Democratic party. The Jacksonians called themselves the Democratic Republicans, the Clay-Adams followers the National Republicans. All old party alignments had ceased. Jeffersonians were in both ranks, and in each were found remnants of the Federalists. The new alignment was complete.

These new armies were led by two leaders as different as day and night. Jackson was always fanatic; Clay was rarely dogmatic. Jackson ruled with the imperium of will; Clay swayed with the magic of eloquence. Jackson was a man of hate; Clay was a man of love. Not to agree with Jackson was to call upon you the retribution of his mighty anger. Not to agree with Clay was to invite his smile and his most beguiling arguments. Jackson believed that every man who did not believe in him was a traitor to the flag; Clay believed that every man who loved the flag was a friend of intellectual freedom. Jackson was all thunder and lightning and destructive tornado; Clay was all sunshine and dew and gentle rain. Jackson was terrible; Clay was magnificent. Jackson inspired trembling fear and deadly hate; Clay called forth all the hosts of confidence and

affection. Jackson was commanding; Clay was gallant. Jackson compelled; Clay attracted. Yet they were similar. Both were "men of the people"; both were worshipped by the masses; both were called upon as the saviour of the land; both shared the fatuation of a devoted following; both were richly endowed with the gift of personal magnetism.

The election brought to Clay a welcome retirement. Before he left Washington, he was given a dinner. The toast he proposed signifies the feelings which were inspired by the election of Jackson. This was the toast: "Let us never despair of the American Republic." In reply he said: "I deprecated the election of the present President of the United States because I believed he had neither the temper, the experience, nor the attainments requisite to discharge the complicated and arduous duties of the chief magistrate. I deprecated it still more because his elevation, I believed, would be the result exclusively of admiration and gratitude for military service, without regard to indispensable civil qualifications. I thought I beheld in his election an awful foreboding of the fate which at some future (I pray God that if it ever arises it be at some far distant) day was to befall this infant republic." But he closes his rather doleful strain by gallantly professing that he will respect the victor "as the chief magistrate of my country."



His journey home was a series of ovations. Everywhere he was met by the outpouring of the populace, and the most flattering evidences of personal devotion. At Frederick, Md., he said, at a dinner in his honor: "I quit the public councils, not only without any personal regrets, but with the highest of all human consolation, that which is not only superior to any other, but the want of which cannot be compensated by the united possessions of all others, which lies deeply embossed in the heart, beyond the reach of human injustice, the consciousness of having faithfully, zealously and consistently discharged my public duties." This was fervently believed by a large mass of his fellow citizens, but a larger mass as religiously believed he had cheated Jackson out of victory four years before.

When he reached his own Lexington a monster meeting was gathered to greet him as neighbor. To these dear friends he always spoke with sincere feeling. This was their sentiment: "Our distinguished guest, friend and neighbor, Henry Clay: with increased proof of his worth, we delight to renew the assurance of our confidence in his patriotism, talents, and incorruptibility; may health and happiness attend him and a grateful nation do justice to his virtues." In his response Clay made an elaborate defense of his attitude toward Jackson, pointed out that there was no bargain and no cor-

ruption, and denounced the President for his wholesale slaughter of federal officials. He closed the speech, one of the best of his efforts, with personal allusions that reveal the true heart of the man: "And now, my friends and fellow citizens, I cannot part from you on possibly this last occasion of my ever publicly addressing you, without reiterating the expressions of my thanks from a heart overflowing with gratitude. I came among you now more than thirty years ago, an orphan boy, penniless, stranger to you all, without friends, without the favor of the great. You took me up, cherished me, caressed me, protected me, honored me. You have constantly poured upon me a bold and unabated stream of innumerable favors. Time, which wears out everything, has increased and strengthened your affection for me. When I seem deserted by almost the whole world, and assailed by almost every tongue and pen, you have fearlessly and manfully stood by me with unsurpassed zeal and undiminished friendship. When I felt as if I should sink beneath the storm of abuse and detraction which was violently raging around me, I have found myself upheld and sustained by your encouraging voice and your approving smiles. I have doubtless committed many faults and indiscretions, over which you have thrown the broad mantle of your charity. But I can say, and in the presence of God, and of this

assembled multitude, I will say, that I have honestly and faithfully served my country, that I have never wronged it, and that however unprepared I lament that I am to appear in the Divine Presence on other accounts, I invoke the stern justice of His judgment on my public conduct without the smallest apprehension of His displeasure."

These confessions as to his patriotic motives and integrity, made to his neighbors, are sustained by history. But to the public at large, his utterances did not carry conviction. The public has no mercy on a man who must prove that he is an honest man. Clay's enemies saw to it that for thirty years he was placed on this defense.

Nor could Clay remain in retirement. A number of times in his career did he resolve to retire to his beloved "Ashland," each time the call of the state and the impulse of talent broke his resolution. At this time he devoted himself to the cultivation of his estate, the breeding of fine animals, and the writing of letters. In 1830 he journeyed south, to New Orleans and Natchez. As always, his progress was marked by balls, receptions, dinners, processions, triumphs. In the summer of the same year he traveled northward through Ohio. Farms and towns were deserted to do him honor. At Cincinnati he was feted by the mechanics, and he spoke freely on the tariff. Of the charges against his character, he appealed to his

auditors: "People of Ohio, here assembled, mothers, daughters, sons, sires, when resting on the peaceful pillow of repose and conning within your hearts, ask yourselves if I ought to be the unremitting object of perpetual calumny. If, when the opponents of the late President gained the victory on the 4th of March, 1829, the war ought not to have ceased, quarters been granted and prisoners released? Did not these opponents obtain all the honors and offices and emoluments of the government, the power which they have frequently exercised of removing whom they pleased and punishing whom they could, was that not sufficient? Does it all avail not whilst Mordecai the Jew stands at the King's gate?"

It availed not. The one upon whom the special punishment should fall was Clay, and Clay was an immortal foe, he could not be stricken. The persecution must therefore continue.

The old ambition was again the ferment in Clay's mind. His princely receptions deceived him. "I have had," he writes a friend, "literally a free passage. Taverns, stages, toll gates, have been formally thrown open to me, free from all charge. Monarchs might be proud of the reception with which I have everywhere been honored." And he says to one of his great audiences: "My journey has been marked by a succession of civil triumphs. I have been escorted from

village to village, and have everywhere found myself surrounded by large concourses of my fellow citizens, often of both sexes, greeting and welcoming me."

It is not to be wondered that the sanguine candidate misinterpreted these flattering demonstrations. He thought they foretold the downfall of Jackson. Had he been clearer sighted, he would have perceived that Jackson might have followed him over the same route and been the recipient of the same flattery and obeisance. With such evidences of favor, Clay could easily be persuaded to leave the joys of privacy and take a seat in the United States senate, to which he was elected in 1831.

When he arrived again in Washington, the Jackson Democracy had an *issue*. The President believed that the United States bank was the enemy of the Republic, for it would not bend to his command. Therefore, he directed against it all the poisoned arrows of his quiver. The Calhoun school of strict construction at once perceived that a constitutional argument was at hand. The government had no power to organize and run a banking business. They were beginning to see more and more clearly that the interests of their own cause demanded strict construction and states-rights. With prompt eagerness they could supplement Jackson's instinct with an argument. When Clay took his seat in the senate he at once

came to the defense of the bank which had prayed for a renewal of its charter. Benton, Jackson's spokesman in the senate, could not defeat the bill granting the extension. But Jackson unhesitatingly vetoed the measure and sent it back to congress with an impassioned veto message. The message was not an argument, it was the rhapsody of an angry soul. Neither the majestic thunder of Webster nor the passionate denunciations of Clay, nor the ringing arguments of Ewing, nor the unsparing satire of Clayton, could drown the strains of that veto measure. Its voice rang over the land like a trumpet call, and the people willingly responded to its notes.

The tariff formed the second issue. Congress had passed the "tariff of abominations" the previous session. The agricultural south denounced it, the manufacturing north wanted it. The planters of the slave states were arrayed against the manufacturers of the free states. The enemies of the tariff made the accumulated surplus in the national treasury the point of their assaults. Jackson, who had been a mild believer in protection, gradually became suspicious of a system that could rob the farmer and heap up an idle surplus in the government vaults. It needed but the advent of Henry Clay, as champion of the tariff, to make the President a profound enemy of the "American System."



A third issue that the National Republicans kept in the foreground was the "Spoils System," as introduced by Jackson. These were the issues.

There was but one presidential candidate in each party, and on December 12, 1831, in a convention held at Baltimore, Henry Clay was unanimously named by the National Republicans to be their standard bearer. The following May the Democratic convention nominated Jackson.

Against the cry of "Spoils System," the Democrats shouted the old cry of "Bargain and Corruption." Against the arguments for a re-charter of the Bank, they hurled back the ominous words "Monster monopoly." And in reply to the favorite arguments for the "American System," they pointed to the glittering pile of "surplus."

Thus the Democrats had the popular side of every question. They very wisely kept Clay in the background. It was not a warfare against the "Gallant Harry of the West," it was a struggle against the powers and principalists of monopoly. The moneyed robbers of the common people, were the magnified objects of popular wrath. These Democrats had a perfect organization. The skilled hand of Martin Van Buren was felt in every county and village of the land. But more than discipline and popular slogans, they had a general who had grown in the eyes of the multitude until his stature

filled all space. He was no longer "Old Hickory." To the backwoodsman and the plainsman he was a demi-god, under whose almighty sword must fall all the enemies of mankind.

Little wonder that the Emperor of Democracy should receive 219 electoral votes, while his brilliant adversary could count only 49.

To the last the National Republicans had been sanguine. But all the constellations were unfavorable. Clay had displeased the south by his attitude on the tariff, he had alienated the masses by his championship of the bank, he had gained nothing by his terrible onslaught upon Jackson. He could easily have afforded to have been more conciliating with the planters, to have delayed the bank issue until after the election, and to have banished the words "military dictator," from his lips. Had Henry Clay, the pacificator, been running, his humility might have been spared; but Henry Clay, the party chieftan, was brought down to utter humiliation by Andrew Jackson, the people's Cæsar.

The shadows of defeat but served to bring out more clearly the brilliance of his genius. Events were transpiring which lifted him from the depths of his humiliations into the splendor of a nation's admiration. Henry Clay is the most defeated and the most admired man in our political history. Each

defeat seemed but the prelude to greater achievement.

When he returned to the senate the country was confronted by a novel theory that threatened disaster. The south had grown sullen under the continued tariff legislation. Her philosophic statesman had formulated her demands into the theory of nullification, arguing that the constitution is only a compact between sovereign states, and that whenever one of the parties to this compact considers a law passed by Congress unconstitutional, it has merely to ignore, to "nullify" the law. Here was a new system of political metaphysics. South Carolina was eager to enforce it with the power of arms. "If the tariff law is not repealed, we will nullify it," was their audacious manifesto. Jackson was a southern man, but his patriotism was national. His proclamation in answer to the nullifiers was uncompromising: "I consider the power to annul a law of the United States incompatible with the existence of the union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the constitution, and destructive of the great objects for which it was formed. Our constitution does not contain the absurdity of giving one power to make laws, and another power to resist them. To say that any state may at pleasure secede from the union, is to say that the United States are not a nation." And in stirring words he warns the rash southerners that


further resistance would be met by all the power of the general government.

In their insane self-fatuation, the South Carolinians replied with insolent threats. This infuriated the old patriot, and he asked congress for power to close ports of entry, employ military force, and extend the jurisdiction of federal courts over all revenue cases. This "Force Bill" the nullifiers at once called the "Bloody Bill."

Congress, meanwhile, was busy with the tariff. Verplank had introduced the administration measure into the house, providing for general reductions in duties. The manufacturers were fearful of the results, and invaded the capitol. No agreement could be reached. The house was helpless, and the senate was floundering around in constitutional arguments on the "Force Bill."

The situation seemed hopeless. A second time one state was holding up the nation. A second time a conciliator appeared. Just twenty days before the final adjournment of congress, Henry Clay, the father of the "American System," who had fought with the energy of a tiger the reduction of tariff in 1832, now introduced a compromise bill providing a reduction of 20 per cent. The manufacturers and politicians were aghast. Had, then, the champion of protection backslidden?

Clay's heart was in the compromise. He formed his measure with the avowed pur-



pose of conciliating the southerners. He loved the union better than a tariff. He dreaded the thought of the military Jackson leading an army into South Carolina. Where would such an invasion end?

Clay's task was cut out for him. He had first of all to win over his political adherents; men who had stood by him in the past campaign, and who now realized that their inflexible attitude toward the planters had brought on the defeat of their favorite candidate. He had also to persuade the manufacturers, whose lobby thronged the corridors. He had finally to win the nullifiers, whose hot blood was rapidly consuming their reason. Strange anomaly, he won over the Philosopher of Nullification first! Calhoun, champion of state rights, father of secession, defender of slavery, was astute enough to see that the compromise was better than the fruitless struggle of one state against the many. He became the first convert.

His immediate friends Clay won by persuasion, by cajoling, by entreaty, by arguing. But the manufacturers, who had financial interests at stake, could be mollified only by an amendment providing for home valuation of imports. The amendment, only after the direst threats, was accepted.

The house bill passed the senate first. Clay ended the debate on his compromise in one of his noblest and most fervid appeals. All the glorious powers of the orator were

lavished upon this cause. He became animate with patriotism, as he proceeded to explain his motives, and closed in a magnificent outburst of feeling: "I have been accused of ambition in presenting this measure. Ambition! inordinate ambition! Low grovelling souls, who are utterly incapable of elevating themselves to the higher and nobler duties of pure patriotism, beings who, forever keeping their own selfish aims in view, decide all public measures by their personal influence in their aggrandizement, judge me by the venal rule which they prescribe for themselves. I am no candidate for any office in the gift of these states, united or separated. I never wish, or expect to be. Pass this bill, tranquillize the country, restore confidence and affection in the union, and I am willing to go to Ashland and renounce public service forever. Yes, I have ambition. But it is the ambition of being the humblest instrument in the hands of Providence, to reconcile a divided people, once more to revive concord and harmony in a distracted land; the pleasing ambition of contemplating the glorious spectacle of a free, united, prosperous and fraternal people."

• The appeal was not in vain. The bill passed both houses, as did the Force Bill, and both received the President's signature. The nullifiers hauled down their insolent banners. The nation breathed freely. Hen-



ry Clay was once more the popular idol, the twice crowned Pacificator.

But while he was thus to behold again "the glorious spectacle of a free and united, prosperous and fraternal people," his compromise had united them only for the moment. His superficial way of studying causes had again failed to enlighten him upon the one true wellspring of all this anti-union current. He failed to see that slavery was at the foundation of nullification, as it had been at the bottom of the Missouri agitation. Slavery was the Great Issue.

After the adjournment of congress, President Jackson made a tour of New York and the New England states. He was everywhere met by the acclaims of the populace. His stout resistance to the nullifiers had won him the sincere admiration of his former enemies.

A month later Clay, too, journeyed east. It was his first visit to New York since 1818. His tour was accompanied by all the bizarre elements of the progress of a prince. He traveled as a conqueror, not as a defeated candidate. His lady was with him, to share in the honors. Municipalities and farms were deserted to greet the "Gallant Harry." From town to town he was escorted by committees of leading citizens. The booming of cannon announced his approach, bands and parades accompanied his entrance into every town and city. The streets along

which he traveled were gaily decorated. Everywhere were given balls and receptions and dinners, most of which he had to decline. At Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, Providence, and Boston his reception was especially cordial.

He could write to Brooke on his return: "My journey was full of gratification. In looking back on the scenes through which I passed, they seem to me to have resembled those of enchantment more than of real life."

Thus the rival princes, the "Great Pacifier" and the "Conqueror of Nullification" had their rival progresses. The over-sanguine Clay again was made buoyant at the sound of universal plaudits; the prospects of another presidential election were bright.

The Democratic papers dropped a little gall into the cup of sweetness. The Washington "*Globe*" asserted that the United States Bank had paid at least \$25,000 "directly into his own pockets to save him from pecuniary, as well as political bankruptcy." "Having, by duping his followers, secured a meagre sort of garrison in the Kentucky legislature, to maintain him at home, he has set forward to make foreign conquest. Taking the cause of the bank in his hand, and probably something else appertaining to it in his pocket, he has marched upon Boston."

The New York "*Courier*" called the "*Globe*" a "sheet of most infamous char-

acter," the "common slanderer of all that is honorable in this country." It was the old cry of bargain and corruption in a new form, and the old, old answer that it was a slander. A greater foe than slander lurked in the rear of that march of triumph. The spirit of slavery entered the serpent of slander, and crawled unnoticed along the dusty highway in the wake of the Pacifigator.

The war between the National Republicans and the Democrats now took the shape of a feud. The senate, then in its golden age of oratory, attracted excited crowds to the corridors. These masters of debate spoke to the whole country. Everywhere the lines of party were being more closely drawn around the leaders and issues of the presidential campaign that had just closed. The opposition to Jackson now completed its coalition. It was a coalition of incongruous fragments, attracted by the negative force of Jackson, into a united opposition. Protectionists from New England voted with nullifiers from the south; anti-Mason radicals worked with conservatives; former federalists under John Quincy Adams, former Jeffersonians under Clay, all were brought together under the banner of the opposition. (They found their motive in the constantly encroaching powers of the executive upon the prerogatives of congress.) In a speech of great power, Clay characterized

this all-pervading energy of the military President:

"The senate has no army, no navy, no patronage, no lucrative offices. no glittering honors to bestow. Around us there is no swarm of greedy expectants, rendering us homage, anticipating our wishes, and ready to execute our commands. How is it with the President? Is he powerless? He is felt from one extremity to the other of this Republic, by means of principles which he has introduced and innovations which he has made in our institutions. Alas! but too much countenanced by congress and a confiding people, he exercises uncontrolled the power of the state. In one hand he holds the purse, and in the other brandishes the sword of the country! Myriads of dependents and partisans scattered over the land are ever ready to sing hosannahs to him, to laud to the skies whatever he does. He has swept over the government like a tropical tornado."

The coalition now received a name. They called themselves Whigs, and their adversaries they called Tories. Clay was quick to seize the opportunity of a favorable election in New York to expound the sources of these names, and their significance:

"It was a brilliant and signal triumph for the Whigs. And they have assured for themselves and bestowed on their opponents a denomination which, according to all the

analogy of history, is strictly correct. It deserves to be extended throughout the whole country. What was the origin among our British ancestors of these appellations? The Tories were the supporters of executive power, of royal prerogatives, of the maxim that the king could do no wrong, of the detestable doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance. The Whigs were the champions of liberty, the friends of the people, and the defendants of their representatives in the House of Commons. During the Revolutionary War the Tories took sides with the king against liberty, the Whigs against royal executive power and for freedom and independence. And what is the present but the same contest in another form? The partisans of the present executive sustain his favor in the most boundless extent. The Whigs are opposing executive encroachment and a most alarming extension of executive power and prerogative. They are contending for the rights of the people, for free institutions, for the supremacy of the constitution and the laws."

But were the Whigs contending for free institutions? Their coalition could not be lasting, because they were clinging to a temporary condition; they ignored the Great Issue, the institution of slavery, the great un-free institution. This was the rock upon which they must break; ostensibly, first, because "the supremacy of the constitu-

tion" involved an interpretation of the limits of state prerogatives, but ultimately because slavery and liberty were the real questions of dispute.

This was apparent even while Clay's words about "free institutions" were passing from his lips. The first element of the coalition to detach itself must be the nullifiers. They were not contending for "free institutions," they could not stand "for the supremacy of the constitution," as interpreted by Webster and Clay. In a few short months Calhoun led his followers back into the exclusive camp of state rights, ultimately to be absorbed by the Jackson party, body and soul.

The coalition retained the name of Whigs, but the Jacksonians did not remain Tories. They were termed Democrats, and the name has clung to them.

The Great Issue was veiled under the more immediate subjects of controversy. The greatest and bitterest of these was over the bank. With stubborn defiance, the Whigs fought inch by inch the encroachments of the Democrats. The resistless power of the iron President overcame them. The deposits were removed, the bank was not re-chartered. The Whigs were more hopeful in their attacks upon Jackson for his shameless policy of degrading office into political spoils. The tenure of office bill passed the senate by the vote of 31 to 16.



Clay had won an ostensible victory, when, on March 28, 1834, the senate passed his resolution censuring the President for assuming power, "not conferred by the constitution and laws, but in derogation of both." As Jackson neared the close of his "reign," his friends enlisted all of their energies to expunge this censure. The passionate gall of personal hate was infused into the debate on the expunging resolution. Webster and Clay, the Hercules and Mars of debate, threw themselves with unwonted fervor into the arena. Clay cried, in his most scorching tones: "What object of his ambition is unsatisfied? When disabled from age any longer to hold the scepter of power, he designates his successor and transmits it to his favorite. What more does he want? Must we blot, deface and mutilate the records of the country to punish the presumptuousness of expressing an opinion contrary to his own? What patriotic purpose is to be accomplished by this expunging resolution? Can you make that not to be which has been? Is it to appease the wrath and to heal the wounded pride of the chief magistrate? If he really be the hero that his friends represent him, he must despise all mean condescensions, all grovelling sycophancy, all self-degradation, all self-abasement. He would reject with scorn and contempt, as unworthy of his fame, your

black scratches and your baby lines in the fair records of his country."

The lines were drawn, in spite of this skilful attempt to make them recoil on Jackson's greatness. And the hero did not treat them with contempt and scorn. He was gleeful, and "gave a grand dinner to the expungers and their wives." He knew that commingled with the red ink of these lines was the blood of his bitterest enemy.

Andrew Jackson left the White House a greater hero than he entered it. He had won every contest; he had endeared himself to the people in spite of his autocracy, his spoils system and his personal vindictiveness.

But the universal prosperity he left behind him was only a tinsel show built upon the flimsy foundation of paper money. No sooner had he handed over to his chosen successor the sceptre of his power than did the halo of his greatness ignite this tinder of worthless securities, and, in the general conflagration of 1837, perish profit and capital. But the fame of this singular tyrant-hero was fireproof.

Nor was his reckless sowing of the wind in assuming unwarranted responsibility and in flinging gibes at the supreme court and congress, without its whirlwind harvest. Niles, the quaint and faithful chronicler, wrote in August, 1835: "Many people of the United States are out of joint. A spirit

of riot and a disposition to take the law in their own hands prevails in every quarter." To the impulsive and unthinking masses this autocrat transmitted his own spirit of lawlessness. While the strong-maned lion still held sway in the forest, the other animals obeyed, but when he was succeeded by the sly fox of Kinderhook, anarchy joined panic and the whole land was in dire distress.

The incoherent nature of the Whig party was manifest in the presidential campaign of 1836. They held no national convention, they presented no united front. In some states William Henry Harrison was supported, while the southern wing put forward Hugh L. White. Clay was not prominent in the campaign. His defeat four years before had dampened the ardor of the practical politicians and Clay was very sensitive about it. He resented any insinuations that another Whig could make a better candidate. His presidential disease was now chronic. The microbe had eaten into his soul. It made him dejected. He wrote to his friends that he thought of retiring. Domestic affliction and financial trouble hastened him to this conclusion. But he did not retire. The lure of the great prize was too potent. The crisis that had borne so heavily on the Democrats, rejuvenated the Whigs, and Henry Clay became a candidate for the nomination in 1840, long before VanBuren's first year had drawn to a close. The great

personal tilt with Calhoun, who had entirely broken away from the coalition, served to keep the brilliant orator before the public eye.

The Whig coalition in the meantime was augmented by recruits from erstwhile Jacksonians, many of whom were against internal improvements, against a high tariff, against a bank, but who rebelled against Van Buren's sub-treasury measure. Now, Clay, the candidate, set himself to the task of convincing these newest additions to his loosely woven political fabric, that he was really not an extremist in tariff. The compromise of 1833 suited him very well. He believed the government should not charter another bank until the people asked for it; that congress really was not called upon to aid the further building of internal improvements, because the states were enabled to do so by the distribution act. To the slavery men in his party, Clay threw a sop dipped in the rancor of an anti-abolition speech which he had made before the American Colonization Society in Washington in 1835, and which he virtually repeated in Congress two years later. The great pacificator compromised with his convictions to gain the presidency. Of all compromises, this is the least enduring and the most fatal.

Clay alienated the anti-Masons, who had developed into a considerable party in New York; he displeased Webster's friends, who

thought their god should have a chance; and he affronted the anti-slavery Whigs. When the national convention of the Whigs met in Harrisburg, December 4, 1839, these elements of hostility had united with the practical politicians, who, under the leadership of Thurlow Weed, of New York, realized that Clay was a stale candidate. So they set about to accomplish his downfall. And this they accomplished through the dark arts of politics. Realizing that a rousing nominating speech would stampede the convention for Clay, they provided that nominations be made by committees. Each delegation appointed a committee of three, and these ascertaining "the views and opinions" of their respective delegations, reported to a large committee composed of all these sub-committees. In the secret chamber of the select committee, the manipulators wrought what not even a miracle could have accomplished in the open. They substituted an unknown, untalented man, whose only qualifications were his obscurity and a war record, for the brilliant statesman, orator, leader, who for over thirty years had been the idol of the people. And when it became known that William Henry Harrison had received the nomination, the friends of the "Old Prince" wept with disappointment and indignation.

Clay himself received the news of his overthrow in a very undignified and unbecoming

manner. He had in these later years grown imperious and impatient of opposition in his own party. He looked upon himself as the creator of the Whig party, and as its creator he deemed himself the sole ruler. So when he learned of the outcome of the intrigue against him, his rage was terrible, like the anger of a god. Even the storm of Clay's wrath was sublime.

His own judgment of the event is true. He said: "I am the most unfortunate man in the history of parties; always run by my friends when sure to be defeated, and now betrayed for a nomination when I or anyone, would be sure of an election." Such are the vicissitudes of politics. But who led to this betrayal? Was not Clay his own Judas Iscariot? Did he not trifle with his own convictions that he might win the prize of high office? Who should hang for this treason, the betrayer, who was at once the betrayed, or those shrewd men who buttressed their strength with Clay's weakness?

The sanguine orator soon recovered from the shock of his downfall and became the master of the hustings in that whirl of hysteria and excitement called the "hard cider campaign."

Van Buren received only 60 electoral votes, Harrison 234. His popular majority of 150,000 was utterly overwhelming to the scant 7,000 votes received by Birney and LeMoyne, the anti-slavery candidates. Not



a line in the contemporary prints revealed that the political prophets foresaw the great significance of these 7,000 protests.

Clay found temporary solace in the hope that, if he could not be President, he could be the boss of the President. He assumed control of affairs in his usual imperious manner. What was his humiliation when Harrison calmly told him: "You forget, Mr. Clay, that I am President," and followed the rebuke with a request that whatever suggestions Clay had to make he should reduce to writing! Clay wrote a letter to the President assuring him he would not trouble him again by calling at the White House.

Fate made the sharp protest unnecessary. Harrison died suddenly after having been in office one short month.

Clay resolved to have better luck with Tyler, who, as Vice-President, succeeded Harrison. "He dare not resist," Clay said. "I will drive him." He did drive Tyler, but he drove him out of the Whig party. The two men could not travel the same highway. When the bank bill was vetoed by the President, they came to the parting of the ways. And Clay took the Whig party with him, while Tyler, deserted, footsore, forsaken, wandered into the by-ways of the Democratic party, from which he had severed himself when he resigned a seat in the senate rather than vote for the expunging resolutions, in obedience to the demand of the

legislature of his state. All the original Harrison cabinet, except Webster, resigned. Webster remained only to complete some urgent business of the state department. First by tens, then by hundreds, then by thousands the Whigs in the land disowned their first President. "Traitor," they shouted, while the grandiloquent Clay made haughty ridicule of "Captain Tyler and his corporal guard."

Clay had regained the leadership of his party at the cost of this strange alienation between President and partisans. Again he stood forth the brilliant parliamentarian, the center of adoration. His manner became more dictatorial as he assumed the reins of absolutism. More impatient and restless he grew as he saw the dismal failure of the first national Whig triumph. But while he was inflexible, he was still the winning, generous friend. So resplendent were his talents that his followers forgot the tyrant in the idol. He was again the Whig party, its soul and its body, its eyes and its lips.

On the 31st of March, 1842, he took formal leave of the senate. He wished to retire to private life, to retrieve his fortune and to recuperate his worn-out nerves. Only Henry Clay could take such farewell. He unconsciously invested all his public acts with a dramatic splendor that is hard to realize in our straightforward days of prosaic mercantilism. So this valedictory occasion became

a drama. The floor of the senate was the stage, great senators, the flower of the land, were the setting, throngs of ardent spectators that overflowed the chamber, the galleries, and the long corridors, were the auditors, the grandeur of the nation was the subject, his motives during almost forty years of public service, and his personal relations to his colleagues, the theme. There was only one actor in this drama. One other would have been superfluous. His marvelous voice, and sonorous sentences, attuned to every emotion, were never more effective than in this tender farewell from the scenes of his great achievements, and alas, his great disappointments.

The supremest disappointment awaited him at the outer gate.

Let us now recur to the slavery issue and trace the development of the public conscience upon that question. The great Issue had been gradually assuming that shape which revealed its inmost nature. It was not at soul an economic issue, nor a political issue, but a moral issue. Cloak its black self as they would, under the garments of expediency, of economic production, of race superiority, of ethnic danger, of mutual benefits to the commingling races, there remained ever beneath the scant drapings the hideous monster, sin.

The whole nation shuddered at the first wild cry of the despised abolitionist, "Sla-

very is a sin." It was the shudder of conviction; but an unwilling nation answered it with a derision that half concealed its fear: "These men are bigots." And when the Garrisons and Lundies and Lovejoys proclaimed that righteousness and sin cannot dwell together in prosperity, that therefore either slavery or the constitution must yield, they laid themselves open to the charge of high treason. They were doubly dangerous, said the politicians, as bigots, who would not reconcile conscience with expediency; as traitors, who would prefer the destruction of the constitution to the preservation of the Union.

While these discussions were confined to New England school houses and churches, to country newspapers and religious magazines, the politician did not heed them. But the conscience of these abolitionists invaded the halls of congress, and then was precipitated the bitter debate that lasted from January 7, 1836, until the great war became the arbiter of right.

The issue was raised in congress by petitions praying for the abolition of slavery in the district of Columbia. The slave holders desired to ignore these petitions. Terrific onslaughts were made by both sides. The foundations of the nation rocked like a cork on an angry sea. John Quincy Adams, in the house, protected by the drawn revolvers of his friends, held the wolves at bay. The

petitions were received but their prayer denied. Thus slavery raised the issue of free speech versus gag rule.

On July 29, 1835, a mob assaulted a United States post-office in South Carolina for the purpose of searching the mails and destroying certain pamphlets that the abolition society had sent to the south. A bill was brought to congress by Calhoun declaring it unlawful for any postmaster wilfully to deliver any printed mail which discussed slavery, in any state or territory wherein such matter was prohibited by law. The state legislatures were thus to be glorified over the national legislature. The slave states were to dictate to the Union what were the powers of the federal government. The bill was defeated. Thus slavery raised the issue of free mail versus plundered mail.

Yet in a third manner did the Great Issues stalk onto the floors of congress. More depressing to the south than any other fact was the great development of the northern states. They saw themselves outgrown in every direction. To maintain the balance of power they must gain states. Texas was at the door. She could easily be induced to knock. Her admission would add an empire to the cotton growing belt. Into the intrigues which ultimately resulted in annexation and a Mexican War, it is not the function of this essay to enter. The north saw the motive that prompted this eagerness for

territory. The heart of the Texan question was slavery extension. Thus did slavery raise the issue of nationalism versus sectionalism.

How did Henry Clay meet these issues?

Clay was at heart an ardent lover of freedom, a devoted believer in Democratic institutions, and a sanguine prophet of his country's great future. When a youth in the Kentucky constitutional convention, he had introduced a clause providing for emancipation in his state. He had learned the lessons of freedom from his preceptor, Chancellor Wythe. Although a slave holder, he believed in colonization. To him it seemed as impossible for the two races to dwell together in freedom and equality, as it was unjust that they should live together one free and the other slave. In 1827, in a speech before the colonization society, he said: "If I could be instrumental in eradicating this deepest stain upon the character of our country and removing all cause of reproach on account of it by foreign nations; if I could only be instrumental in ridding of this foul blot that revered state which gave me birth, or that not less beloved state which kindly adopted me as her son, I would not exchange the proud satisfaction which I should enjoy for the honor of all the triumph ever received by the most successful conqueror.

\* \* \* Not until universal darkness and despair prevail, can you perpetuate



slavery and repress all sympathies and all human and benevolent efforts among freed men in behalf of the unhappy portion of our race doomed to bondage."

Thus spoke Henry Clay the man; had Henry Clay the candidate been true to these convictions through the succeeding twenty years, he would have been President.

When the first abolition petition came into congress Clay fervently pleaded that they be received. In 1837 he moved that they be not only received, but referred to the committee on the District of Columbia. Calhoun, subtle logician and metaphysician of secession, at once objected that this would raise debate, and that the slavery question was not one for argument. Clay shouted back: "Not a case for argument! What is it that lies at the bottom of all our free institutions? Argument, reasoning, consideration, deliberation. What question is there in human affairs so weak or so strong that it cannot be approached by argument or reason?" Calhoun's cohorts said that these were not the words of a patriot, but of an abolitionist. Calhoun's bill to make the government a robber of its own mails, Clay fought with great vehemence. "From first to last," he declared, "I am opposed to such remedy." The states, he said, must seek their own remedy, after the pamphlets had passed beyond the local post office.

Clay was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee when the Texan question hove in sight. He was an expansionist by temperament. In 1820, when in the house of representatives, he had severely criticized Monroe for relinquishing Texas in the Florida Treaty. He maintained that Texas was a part of the Louisiana purchase. When secretary of state under Adams, he had begun negotiations for the purchase of Texas. But in 1837, as chairman of the committee on foreign relations, his ardor was grown cold. Did the pro-slavery movement act as ice upon his warm zeal for his country's growth?

His committe report was calm and devoid of all appearance of haste or fervor. It resolved, "that the independence of Texas ought to be acknowledged by the United States whenever satisfactory information shall be received that it has in successful operation a civil government, capable of performing the duties and fulfilling the obligations of an independent power."

The speech that accompanied the introduction of this report warned against hasty action and hoped that there would be no war with Mexico.

While Clay the man was setting himself right with his conscience, Clay the candidate was beginning to think that he must set himself right with the south. Gradually he began to absorb the malarial opinion that

the abolitionists were dangerous. In February, 1839, a petition was presented by the citizens of Washington, praying for the continuance of slavery in the district. It was whispered behind doors that Clay was the originator of this petition. He arose to its defense. He spoke very slowly, almost hesitatingly, without fire, without force, without figure. The calculating demeanor of the candidate had dried the well springs of his fluency. The consciousness that he was surrendering convictions to expediency drove the blood from his countenance. With blanched cheeks, parched lips, and scrupulously weighed words, Henry Clay affirmed that he was sorry the slavery question had ever been raised in debate; that abolitionists were a dangerous set of men; that since slavery exists it was better to let it alone than to agitate the public mind, "better for both parties that the existing state should be preserved"; that slaves were property; that the abolition agitation delayed all prospects of emancipation, and that emancipation would usher in "the danger of an ultimate ascendancy of the black race, or of a civil contest which might terminate in the extinction of one race or the other." To make sure his surrender was not complete, he added: "I am no friend of slavery; the Searcher of all Hearts knows that every pulsation of mine beats high and strong in the cause of civil liberty. Whenever it is

safe and practical, I desire to see every portion of the human family in the enjoyment of it. But I prefer the liberty of my own country to that of any other people, and the liberty of my own race to that of any other race. The liberty of the descendants of Africa in the United States is incompatible with the liberty and safety of these European descendants. Their slavery forms an exception, an exception resulting from a stern and inexorable necessity, to the general liberty of the United States. We did not originate, nor are we responsible for this necessity. Their liberty, if it were possible, could only be established by violating the incontestable powers of the states and subverting the union; and beneath the ruins of the union would be buried sooner or later the liberty of both races."

Thus did the candidate bid for the votes of the south. It was answered from an unexpected quarter. Gerrit Smith, a powerful anti-slavery leader, wrote him publicly a letter, advising him to exert his powers "to repeal the matchlessly wicked laws enacted to crush the Savior's poor." "Allow us to assure you," he continued, "that it will be impossible for you to redeem 'Henry Clay the statesman' and 'Henry Clay the orator' and even 'Henry Clay the President of the United States' from the contempt of a slave loathing posterity, otherwise than by coupling with these designations the inexpressibly

more honorable distinction of 'Henry Clay the Emancipator'." It was reserved for another to be the emancipator in the stress of events whose gathering shadows cast a gloom over the last days of Henry Clay the Pacifier.

We have seen how this morsel thrown to the slave-holding Whigs was spurned almost contemptuously in the Harrisburg convention in 1839. It was probably the consciousness of the futility of this surrender that made Clay so angry when he received the news of his undoing. But he did not learn the lesson of this humiliating event. He had hardly delivered his dramatic valedictory to the senate in 1842 than he began to grow impatient to prove to the south that he was not an abolitionist.

The two years, 1842-44, were Clay years. From all over the land came urgent invitations to speak, letters poured in upon him in a deluge; all of them he answered with great precaution. In April, 1842, the Georgia Whigs nominated him for their candidate in the next presidential campaign. Maine, New York, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, followed in the same year. He traveled northward, and at Dayton, Ohio, was greeted by the greatest throng ever assembled to listen to a stump speech. 100,000 people were encamped upon the fields. They came from the adjacent townships, in wagons, on horseback, on foot. Acres of people were

his auditory, the blue sky and the open field his auditorium. For never was building erected large enough to hold the gathered thousands who met to proclaim Henry Clay their chosen idol.

He journeyed southward to New Orleans. He had his progress through the Carolinas and Georgia. Everywhere was wild enthusiasm. There was no abatement for two years of this spontaneous flow of the spirit of Clay worship. Ashland was the Mecca of all politicians. Thither the worshipping multitude brought its offerings. "American made goods for American consumption," was the motto written upon every gift. Barrels of American salt, braces of American turkeys, bolts of American woolens and cottons, bottles of American wine, jugs of American whisky, flasks of American cologne, found their way to the capacious storerooms of Ashland. The stately halls gave gracious welcome to distinguished men from all over the land and from Europe.

The elections of 1843 were Whigish. The augurs were auspicious. The sanguine hero was in gleeful mood. Not a cloudlet was seen upon his political horizon. A true prophet could have discerned a blackness the size of a man's hand.

In May, 1844, the Whig national convention met at Baltimore and ratified what the clamorous multitude had already accomplished. With hurrah and with song Henry



Clay was nominated and the disappointed Webster stolidly reëntered the ranks of the Whigs. He had found John Tyler's company too uncongenial. The Democratic convention met a few days later. It was unanimously admitted that Martin Van Buren should be the candidate. But the politicians willed otherwise. The pro-slavery men ruled the convention. "Texas or Disunion" was their insane cry. "The re-occupation of Oregon and the re-annexation of Texas" was their popular slogan. Van Buren had straddled the Texas question. He was therefore unavailable, and James K. Polk, unknown and unsung, was named to run against Henry Clay, whose glories filled the whole heavens. The contrast seemed embarrassing to the Democrats, ridiculous to the Whigs, and humiliating to the great Clay. The question, "Who is Polk?" was the campaign argument of the Whigs. The answer was a death dealing blow.

In spite of Clay's most strenuous endeavors, the Texas question became the real issue of the campaign. Despised Tyler, the Whig Vice-President, elevated to the first Whig Presidency by the death of Harrison, foisted this issue upon the Whig party. This was his revenge for the ruthless way Clay had thrust him outside the party door. For three years Tyler's scheming brain was busy intriguing for the annexation of Texas. He hoped thereby to gain the Democratic

nomination in 1844. On April 12, 1844, the treaty of annexation was signed and sent to the senate. The outcast Tyler forced the imperious Clay to take official notice of the issue. This he did in a letter, dated April 17, 1844, written at Raleigh, N. C. In it he reviewed his attempts to purchase Texas when he was secretary of state under Adams. He affirmed that Texas was part of the Louisiana purchase, and had been shamefully relinquished for Florida. He frankly avowed that we had taken too open a part in the Texas revolt, and that to acquire the state contrary to the consent of Mexico would mean war with our southern neighbor. This would be deplorable. Moreover, there was a strong opposition in the north against such annexation. The "balance of power" argument he flung aside with derision. The national honor should not be stained by sending us into a war for the mere purpose of gaining additional territory. 4

This neutral letter naturally failed to please the southern Whigs, nor was it ratified by the violent anti-slavery Whigs of the north, for it refrained from mentioning the one reason why the annexation of Texas would be obnoxious to them, namely because it would expand the slave territory. The body of the party acquiesced to its views. The letter was scarcely dry upon its page ere it was followed by one from Van Buren of similar import. Van Buren had met

Clay at Ashland in 1842 and the two friendly antagonists had agreed to oppose the annexation of Texas if it became an issue. The agreement was kept, and neither of the parties thereto was elected.

Clay might have been elected had he been content to rest on his Raleigh letter. Words came too easily to the orator. His great anxiety to be elected made him restless and shook from him another letter, sent to Stephen F. Miller, of Tuscaloosa, Ala., July 1, 1844. He denounced emphatically the charge that he was courting the abolitionists. "No man in the United States has been so much abused by them as I have been." "Personally I could have no objection to the annexation of Texas; but I certainly should be unwilling to see the existing union dissolved or seriously jeopardized, for the sake of acquiring Texas. If any one desires to know the leading and paramount object of my public life, the preservation of the Union will furnish him the key."

This was a patriotic benediction to a direct slap at the abolitionists. Slavery was at last recognized by Clay as the issue. But the warm blood of his southern friends was not satisfied. In response to urgent requests he wrote a second letter to the same Miller on July 27. "I have," he said, "no hesitation in saying that, far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, I should be glad to see it, without dishonor,

without war, with the common consent of the Union, and upon just and fair terms. I do not think that the subject of slavery ought to affect the question one way or the other.”

Fate might have whispered into Webster's ear, when he rose to deliver his 7th of March speech in 1850: “Remember the Ides of March!” What cruel spirit whispered fatuation into Clay's ear when he penned these Alabama letters?

The blackness, the size of a man's hand, now grew into a threatening thunder cloud. It spread over the whole horizon. Abolitionists and “Conscience Whigs” pointed the finger of derision at the truckling trimmer, to them no hero, but a slavemaster. By the hundreds did the anti-slavery Whigs forsake their party. Clay, when too late, saw the disaffection and tried to check it. Letter after letter, protest after protest, was unheeded. These northern deserters had a conscience.

The campaign moved forward, carried on the wings of song and of shout. Joyously the Whigs sang:

“For Henry Clay our candidate,

Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah,

To place him in the chair of state,

Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah.

God's noblest work, an honest man,

A nobler show us if you can,

Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, hurrah,

Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah.”

"Shout Yankee Doodle, Whigs, huzza!

We're done with Captain Tyler,  
He who has been his country's flaw,  
Shall never more defile her.

For Farmer Clay, then, boys, hurrah,  
And proudly here proclaim him,  
The great, the good, the valiant Hal  
And shout when'er ye name him."

"We spread our banners to the sky,  
Our motto, Clay and Liberty!  
At victors we our veto fling,  
A President we want, not King."

Thus they sang in cheerful glee of their  
"Old Coon," their "Star of the West," their  
"Gallant Harry."

And this was the doleful echo of their song  
that came from the New England hills. It was  
the story of a slave who longed for freedom.  
In his anguish for liberty he said: "Oh, that I  
might be free!" His master overheard the  
exclamation and whipped the negro to death.

"The thong was in his hand  
A thong of knotted hide.  
Hardened with blood beside,  
And braided as a band;  
Blow after blow he gave,  
To that unhappy slave.  
As is in boyish play,  
He lashed him 'til the gore  
His quivering limbs ran o'er.  
Huzza for Henry Clay.

“Each strip curled up the flesh,  
And it crawled upon his bones.  
Then fainter grew his groans;  
But as the blood ran fresh,  
’Twas lash, and lash, and lash.  
Oh, God! that fearful gash!  
Thy hand in mercy stay!  
And with that knotted hide,  
He lashed him till he died,  
Huzza for Henry Clay.”

The orthodox abolitionists who gave circulation to many such poems, unearthed all of the past. They learned that Clay had at one time, in his youth, been fond of cards, therefore he was a gambler; that, in the heat of a personal controversy, he had at one time uttered an oath, therefore he was a blasphemer; that he had ordered his servants to work on Sunday, therefore he was a Sabbath breaker; that he was courting the Catholics, and the Mormons, therefore he was an unbeliever; that he had fought many duels, therefore he was a murderer; that he owned slaves, therefore he was a slave owner.

Before the campaign ended, Andrew Jackson broke his silence, and reaffirmed his conviction that, way back in 1824, Clay had cheated Jackson out of the Presidency, through “bargain and corruption.” The personal hatred of the old man did not parch with his age.

These desultory movements of the more fanatic abolitionists would have resulted in



nothing, had it not been for a little convention held in Buffalo, August 30, 1843. The Liberty party here named James G. Birney and Thomas Morris as its candidates. They were not abolitionists; they were devoted to the constitution and their country. They desired that slavery should cease, but that its abolition should be brought about through constitutional means. In 1840 they had polled 7,000 votes. During the quadrennium they had grown. Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio, a man of great talents and splendid vigor, became their leader. Birney, their candidate, was a cultured gentleman, a Kentucky lawyer, who had freed his slaves for conscience' sake. The party was composed of men of judgment, talent, patriotism, and righteousness. A few abolitionists came to swell their votes. But Clay's unfortunate Alabama letters made a host of converts to the new party out of anti-slavery Whigs. Against Clay they directed their warfare. Not that Polk was less a slave-owner, but Clay had tampered with his best convictions. Upon him the Liberty party had hoped to place their votes. Now they heaped upon his aged head the supremest disappointment of his eventful life.

In New York, the Liberty party polled 15,812 votes. Polk had a majority over Clay of 5,080. Ambrose Spencer, of New York, told Clay the plain blunt truth. "The Abolition vote lost you the election, as three-

fourths of them were firm Whigs converted into abolitionists.”

New York held the balance of Clay's fate. The returns from the eastern counties showed heavy Democratic gains. The hopes of the Whig managers hung upon the slender thread of increased Whig majorities in the western counties. The returns came in very slowly; the suspense was agonizing. But each rider from the rural districts brought distracting news. Hope diminished with each recurring day, until the final count revealed the awful defeat of their idol.

The whole land was stunned. Men gathered in groups at village corners, and spoke in whispers. Women and children joined their fathers and husbands in the universal wail and lamentation. Men wept, and foretold the ruin of the republic. Probably no other national event has had such a distressing effect upon the popular imagination, excepting only the assassination of Lincoln. Everybody felt as if a great wrong had been done. Business joined sentiment in the mourning, and the Great Hero of the masses, thrice defeated, was thrice glorified through their sorrowful adoration.

From the ashes of defeat rose for the fifth time the phoenix of his ambitions. The tenacity of the old man's desire to be President was equalled only by his talents to inspire the enthusiasm of his devoted following and to move constantly before the people, the

conspicuous center of excitement and admiration.

The quiet of Ashland was invaded by a constant stream of visitors, who came to do homage to the great Whig. His repose was voluntarily broken by a series of journeys and ovations, which kept the nation always conscious that Henry Clay had not retired, and that he was not defeated. To his loyal and faithful friends he was still the tower of strength and majesty. They sang:

“Not fallen, no! as well the tall  
And pillowed Alleghanies fall!”

To them the victim of minorities was the victor of majorities.

In January, 1845, he spoke at a meeting of the American Colonization Society, held in Washington. Alexander H. Stephens described the event to his brother: “Last night Mr. Clay made a show on the colonization questions, and such a show I never saw. Men came from Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, to say nothing of Alexandria and this city. The house and galleries were jammed and crammed before five o’clock.”

And this was only two months after the fateful election. If people were willing to lend him their ears, they were not willing to loan him their convictions.

Somewhat later he made a progress through the south. The ladies of Tennessee brought him a costly vase; those of Virginia erected

his statue in Richmond; the people of New Orleans greeted him as a king.

In the autumn of 1847 Clay gave notice that he would address his fellow citizens at Lexington on the slavery question, and the Mexican War. An uncountable throng from all the neighborhood and from neighboring states gathered to hear his solemn warning against extension of territory by conquest, merely for the purpose of selfish aggrandizement. Scott had entered the City of Mexico, and the stars and stripes were floating over the royal palace. The American people seemed in a delirium of excitement. The most absurd schemes were afloat to incorporate Mexico into the nation. It was to allay this intoxication that Clay issued, in his grandest manner, his prophetic manifesto. He closed his speech by offering a series of resolutions, declaring that the war was one of aggression, that the annexing of Mexico would result in despotism, that peace with Mexico should be generous, embracing only a severing of Texas from the Mexican domain, and that "we do positively and emphatically disclaim and disavow any wish or desire on our part to acquire any foreign territory whatever for the purpose of propagating slavery, or of introducing slaves from the United States into such foreign territory."

Clay had touched the pulse of the north, and his resolutions were received and re-

adopted in great mass-meetings in every northern state. The speech was one of the first recorded by "magnetic telegraph." A courier hastened from Lexington to Cincinnati, a distance of 84 miles, in five hours. Within twenty-four hours the great speech was reported in New York. This was a marvel upon which the papers of the day dwelt in astonishment. It reveals the importance placed by the nation upon the utterances of Henry Clay.

A few months later Clay journeyed east to receive ovations in Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. This series of festivals showed again the tremendous popularity of this singular man, whom the people loved to defeat, that they might the more lavish their love upon him.

Clay was a candidate again. He had never ceased being a candidate. The polls had scarcely closed in 1844 before his friends asked him to stand in 1848. He cautiously replied that it was altogether too early to plan for that event. While nursing his defeat, he fed his desires, and before 1845 arrived, he had quite fully determined to run again, if he could thus "serve the people and the Whig party." The "next time" was Clay's to-morrow, always just beyond his grasp. The leading Whigs were tired of defeat. They shared the opinion of John J. Crittenden, a true friend of Clay and an able man: "I prefer Clay to all men for the

Presidency, but my conviction, my involuntary conviction is, that he cannot be elected."

Clay had formed the habit of running for the Presidency, and the people had gotten into the habit of defeating him. It is as difficult for the people to break habits, as it is for individuals.

Wars were deadly to Clay's aspirations. His own war of 1812 brought forth Jackson, Indian wars produced Harrison, the war with Mexico gave the nation General Taylor.

Thurlow Weed and his associates were scanning the horizon for a warrior hero whose past would not stand in his way, and grim Zackary Taylor proved their man. He had no past, and although he had never voted in his life, and had never expressed any predilections for party excepting that he had admired Henry Clay and had worn homespun, the Whig politicians took him in their arms and gently nursed his candidacy. The rough and ready frontiersman and victorious soldier was made a popular hero. In the party prints, and in "people's meetings," he was proclaimed. On February 22, 1848, an enormous Whig mass meeting was held in Philadelphia to celebrate Washington's birthday, and the battle of Buena Vista, and to nominate Taylor for President. To set his candidacy on a partisan basis the old general was called "an undoubted Whig." At first reluctant to assume so important a



rôle, the simple soldier was soon made to believe that he was the man for the place, that the people called to him, and that he must obey their call.

Clay grew restive under the increasing clamor for the General. The popularity of the military candidate chafed upon his pride. It galled him to think that any other than Henry Clay could be the Whig candidate. He could not see how so insignificant and unknown a person could assume to be a rival of Henry Clay. He had forgotten the lesson that Harrison had taught him. He was soon to learn it over again in humility and chagrin. In April, 1848, he wrote a letter permitting the Whigs to "use his name" in the national convention. This public utterance, he supposed, would effectually put Taylor out of the way. But the old General had tasted the sweets of ambition's cup, and announced that if he could not get the Whig nomination, he would run as the people's candidate, on a ticket of his own. Here was magnificent audacity. A man who had never approached the ballot box dared to beard the great Whig lion in his native cave! With the backing of the politicians, Taylor's boldness ceased to be humorous. When the manifesto was made known to Clay, he was violently angered; when he learned that even his beloved Kentucky was turning against him, his wrath was turned into humiliation and grief.

The Whig convention met June seventh in Philadelphia. On the first ballot Taylor had 111 votes, Clay 97, the rest scattering. On the fourth ballot Taylor's vote had grown to 171, while Clay's had dwindled to only 32. For the first time in his long career, the Kentucky delegation deserted its idolized son. The convention was bedlam. Clay could command only a minority, but they were turbulent in their opposition to Taylor, and virulent in their anger against the New York domination.

Every attempt to ratify a reasonable anti-slavery resolution was shouted down amidst the mingled jeers of the southern Whigs and the dire threats of the "conscience Whigs," until the latter left the hall in disgust, denouncing the disgraceful proceedings, and disclaiming any further allegiance to the Whig party. Slavery was the rock upon which Clay's party was wrecked. It had tried through duplicity to lure both north and south into its ranks. It succeeded in 1848. But it was the last victory. The storm of anti-slavery conviction swept it high upon the rocks, a mangled wreck of driftwood and cordage.

While his coalition was thus crumbling to pieces under the elements of public opinion, poor Clay was pleading with his friends to allow him to remain in solitude and peace. Great domestic affliction had bowed his heart in grief. Six fair daughters had died, one son

was a lunatic, another a spendthrift, his most promising son fell at Buena Vista. His estate was heavily encumbered and his health broken. He thought seriously of selling his beloved Ashland. One day when he went to his bank to make a payment, he was told that all his obligations were paid. "Who paid them?" he asked quickly. The banker would only say that some friends had discharged all the debts. Only the persuasion of his family and intimate friends finally impelled the proud man to accept this generosity.

Fifty years of constant activity in public affairs had incapacitated Clay for repose and leisure. The slavery question was now uppermost in the thought of all men, and since Henry Clay had ceased to be a candidate, he at seventy-two took up the work where he had laid it down at twenty-two. In a letter to a friend he set forth his plans of gradual emancipation and transportation to Liberia. It was practically the theory of his youth, rehabilitated in the logic of old age.

If the country was through with Henry Clay, the Master of Coalition, it had yet to utter its loudest call to Henry Clay, the Pacificator. In the autumn of 1849 he was unanimously chosen by the Kentucky legislature to his old seat in the United States senate. He left the rural quiet of his retirement to lead in the last and greatest battle of his long and eventful life.

The war with Mexico was a southern war, sullenly submitted to by the north. The slave states were eager to enjoy the fair fruits of conquest, the free states were loath to dedicate new lands to the cause of their enemy. Thus arose a quarrel over the division of the spoils. The issue was immediately shaped by economic forces at work in the remotest portion of the newly acquired territory. Gold was the lodestone that drew thousands of fortune-seekers to California; and when these rugged men came to Washington with a free-state constitution in their hands, they brought consternation to the south, courage to the north, and a crisis to the Union.

When Clay reached Washington, the atmosphere was charged with the electric forces of disunion, threatening to shape themselves and hurl their swift and destructive bolts against the national government. Insolent words were loudly spoken everywhere, in hotels, on streets, in the chambers of government; insults were offered the Union on every public occasion. The constellation of stars in the national flag was about to dissolve itself into the nebular units whence it had sprung. Clay was amazed at the boldness of the southern secessionists. He had hoped to remain a calm observer of events, "rarely speaking," as he wrote to a friend. But the events were too dramatic to allow repose, too laden with danger to permit of silence.

Henry Clay the candidate was dead; Henry Clay the patriot was throbbing with life. No more dualism, no more dodging of issues, no more expediency for him. The statesman of compromise, indeed, could not view the great issue as did the newly elected senators, Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio, and William H. Seward, of New York, as moral evils to be forthwith eradicated, root and branch. But he did foresee that ultimately slavery must pass away, and he heartily believed that the only pathway to peace lay through the neutral field of compromise.

The specific issues were fivefold: First, the admission of California as a free state, opposed by the south; second, the application of the Wilmot Proviso to the remainder of the conquered country, opposed by the south; third, the adjustment of the Texan boundary, the south claiming the Rio Grande boundary for the state, thereby extending the confines of a slave state, the north insisting upon the historical boundary, extending the free territory of New Mexico; fourth, the question of a fugitive slave law, allowing the master to pursue his fleeing slaves into the free states; and, finally, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the prohibition of the slave trade therein.

It was on the 29th day of January, 1850, that Clay arose to announce to an expectant nation his "comprehensive scheme of adjustment." Concession was the spirit, pa-

triotism the motive of his plan. He sought to be reasonable, that he might appeal to reason; conciliatory, that he might implore justice; cautious, that he might not offend; and patriotic, that he might create a national fervor. His eloquence became almost supernatural, and he invested his cause with such power of argument and lofty sentiment that the world followed his sentences with delight and his sentiments with reverence.

This was the framework of his plan: First, California should be at once admitted as a free state. This was agreeable to the north. Second, that congress prepare territorial governments for New Mexico and Utah without any restrictions as to slavery. This sacrificed the Wilmot Proviso and displeased the north; it did not authorize slavery and it did therefore not content the south. Third, that the Rio Grande boundary be virtually adopted and Texas be paid an indemnity. This did not greatly antagonize either contestant. Fourth, that Maryland must consent before slavery could be abolished in the District of Columbia, but that, fifth, the slave trade be prohibited therein. This was clearly middle ground. Sixth, that the fugitive slave law be made more rigid. And finally, that congress had no authority to prohibit the slave trade between slave states. These latter to please the south.

Clay gave his colleagues a week to study his plan before he opened the debate.



The fifth day of February, 1850, remains a memorable day in the annals of our parliamentary history. On that day the great debate on the last compromise with slavery was opened by the Master of Compromise. The "Old Prince" was 73 years old, feeble and sickly, hardly able to take his customary walk to the capitol. "I feel myself quite weak and exhausted this morning," he remarked to a friend upon whose arm he leaned heavily as he climbed the capitol steps. But it was merely the infirmity of the flesh. The spirit of this wonderful man bowed only under the burden of impending national disaster. To his friends, solicitous for his health, imploring him to postpone the debate, he avowed that his life was of little consequence compared with the preservation of the Union.

The increased tension of the situation had quickened public expectation. When Clay entered the senate chamber he found himself the center of a notable and wonderful throng. Grouped around him were the most talented men of his country. The senate itself was composed of a galaxy of brilliant minds. At least three of these senators, including Clay, were men of the very first magnitude. These were Calhoun, the metaphysician of nullification, and Webster, the majestic defender of the constitution. Scarcely less distinguished was Benton, whose power for research was almost superhuman, and Stephen A. Douglas, whose

incisive logic was the potent ally of a wonderfully active mind, and Cass, dogmatic, cautious, ambitious, the associate of Clay in his efforts for compromise. There also sat Thomas Corwin, whose wit and eloquence had won him the plaudits of the whole land, and Berrien, the "American Cicero," and Hannibal Hamlin, savior of the Wilmot Proviso, and later the Vice-President under Lincoln; and John P. Hale, New Hampshire's sturdy anti-slavery advocate and later presidential candidate of the Liberty party; and "Honest John" Davis, the able colleague of Webster, whose record for practical statescraft has been unfortunately forgotten in the glorification of his greater colleague; and John Bell, later the candidate for the presidency of the Constitutional Union party; and Daniel S. Dickenson, an orator of great ability and the friend and helper of Lincoln; and William L. Dayton, an able jurist, the friend and adviser of President Taylor, and the first Vice-Presidential candidate of the Republican party. And there sat Jefferson Davis, whom fate had selected for the active leader in the very movement that Clay so arduously sought to avert, with King, of Alabama, and Foote, of Mississippi, and Mason, of Virginia, and Atchison, of Missouri, a potent partnership in the death struggle of slavery. These were confronted by Seward, of New York, and Chase, of Ohio, leaders of the newer statesmanship of anti-slavery aggression.

Ranged around this remarkable group of senators, upon the floor of the chamber, were members of the diplomatic corps, congressmen from the other side of the capitol, judges, who had left their benches, and cabinet members who had abandoned their desks, all to hear the eloquent Clay plead his cause of conciliation. And beyond these statesmen and diplomats and jurists, congesting the aisles, overflowing the galleries, filling the corridors, sweeping down the capitol steps, and reaching far out into the street, was the crowd; the crowd that Clay loved more than he loved the great and the wise, and the crowd that loved him with filial affection and revered him with a strange devotion. From Baltimore and New York and Philadelphia and Boston and all the country round they poured, these people, these hordes, to listen once again to the winning accents and rolling sentences of their idol. They feared it might be his last public appearance. The years that had dealt so harshly with his hopes had dealt no more kindly with his frame. "Light Horse Harry of the West" was becoming an old man.

When he rose to address the president of the senate, he was greeted with applause. The crowd outside the door caught up the cheering and the corridors resounded with wild huzzahs, which were reëchoed from the streets.

The orator soon found his voice and spoke with all the power of his former years. His speech lasted two days. Its tone was conciliatory. Of the north he asked forbearance, of the south he pleaded patience, of all he demanded patriotism and loyalty to the Union. He traced the outgrowth of the prevailing excitement to the War with Mexico, and foretold the horrors of the civil war that would surely follow in the wake of secession.

On the second day it was very apparent that he was proceeding only under the greatest determination of his will power. Several times he had to pause for rest, but he would not consent to an adjournment and the further postponement of the question. When he concluded, the crowd from without swept through the senate chamber to take him by the hand, to kiss him and to caress him, and bestow upon him every possible mark of regard and affection.

Probably this speech, and the sustained effort it called forth, hastened his death. While he lingered two years longer, he never regained his former vigor.

The debate thus auspiciously begun is one of the greatest and longest in the annals of congress. Through the spring and all the long, hot summer, the discussion ebbed and flowed. The people followed its arguments, its lofty flights of oratory and bitter personalities, with a sustained interest born of fear for their country and hope for their cause.

Calhoun answered Clay on March 4. He was too feeble to speak. So he reclined on a couch while Mason, of Virginia, read his closely woven arguments. It was the argument of a dying man in behalf of a dying cause. Webster followed with his pitiable "Seventh of March speech," wherein he abandoned his former attitude on the Wilmot Proviso, excused slavery in Texas, taunted the "Conscience Whigs," condemned the abolitionists, commanded more stringent fugitive slave laws, and prophesied that secession could be accomplished only by force. This strange speech he concluded with a peroration that dwelt upon the blessings of a united country and pleaded the cause of the Union.

Seward and Chase angered the south, abashed the north, and aggravated the middlemen, by their moral appeal to "a higher law," by their bitter and unqualified denunciation of slavery as a *sin*; by their bold onslaught upon the stronghold of the Whigs. The old-school statesmen, who had participated in many debates upon slavery, were utterly confounded by these young prophets. Little did they dream that within one short decade these "impudent upstarts" would become the masters of the land, because they discerned the truth that slavery was a moral issue.

The debate dragged on. Clay's task was almost the impossible; his efforts were

almost supernatural. His "Omnibus Bill" did not please the extreme pro-slavery men, it was ridiculed by the extreme anti-slavery men. It satisfied no one. Some were opposed to it because it gave too much to Texas, others because it did not abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Some fought it because they saw danger in abandoning the military government of Utah and New Mexico; others because they would not vote for the immediate annexation of California. The opposition of President Taylor was abruptly ended by his death in July.

Clay was on the floor constantly and spoke almost daily, rallying, dispersing, answering, asking, threatening, pleading. His body was so enfeebled that he could scarcely reach the senate chamber. Yet he fought off the fatigue and pain that he might fight the enemies of his country. Never were his brilliant powers more in evidence. His whole spirit was aflame with zeal for the Union. "If Kentucky to-morrow should unfurl the banner of resistance unjustly, I will never fight under that banner. I owe a paramount allegiance to the whole Union, a subordinate one to my own state.

"The senator speaks of Virginia being my country. This Union, sir, is my country; the thirty states are my country. Kentucky is my country, and Virginia no more than any state in the Union."



And again: "Let us go to the fountain of unadulterated patriotism, and, performing a solemn lustration, return, divested of all selfish, sinister, and sordid impurities, and think alone of our God, our country, our conscience, and our glorious Union."

These sentences are the key to Clay's compromise. That his policy was temporary must now be admitted; that his purpose was pure and lofty cannot be doubted.

The south answered by threats of war; they pictured the land red in gore and blood. Clay replied: "If blood is to be spilt, by whose fault is it to be spilt? Upon the supposition I maintain, it will be the fault of those who raise the standard of disunion and endeavor to prostrate this government; and, sir, when that is done, so long as it please God to give me a voice to express my sentiments, or an arm, weak and enfeebled as it may be by age, that voice and that arm will be on the side of my country, for the support of the general authority, and for the maintenance of the powers of this Union!"

When Rhett, of South Carolina, proposed to his neighbors in a public meeting that they at once secede, Clay poured upon him the copious streams of his invective. Barnwell, senator from South Carolina, Calhoun's successor, told Clay that he had treated Rhett disrespectfully. The old fighter was on his feet in an instant. "Mr. President, I said nothing with respect to the character

of Mr. Rhett. I know him personally, and have some respect for him. But if he pronounced the sentiment attributed to him of raising the standard of disunion and of resistance to the common government, whatever he has been, if he follows up that declaration by corresponding overt acts, *he will be a traitor*," the orator's voice shrieked, *"and I hope he will meet the fate of a traitor!"* These words reëchoed from every state, like Patrick Henry's famous challenge to the Virginia Royalists.

At this time a delegation of manufacturers from Boston called on him at his hotel to get favorable tariff legislation. He told them not to talk to him about tariffs when it was doubtful whether they had a country. He advised them to urge some of their fanatical Massachusetts congressmen to give up some of their sectional jealousies and foster peace. "When the country is saved, I will attend to your tariff." The men were naturally displeased, but on the next day Clay won their hearts by his warm appeals.

It was a magnificent fight, this struggle of an old man against congress. For it seemed as if all were against him. One after the other of his measures was amended to death, until there finally remained only the bill establishing a territorial government in Utah.

On the second of August Clay was compelled to give up the struggle. The strain

2 of the six months had exhausted his nerves, the torrid heat of the capitol had evaporated his energies, but most of all, the defeat of his measures had broken his heart. He went to Newport to seek rest and strength. As soon as he had gone, the senators realized what they had done. His inspiring presence had somehow led them to hope for another remedy, but now that they were left alone to face the crisis on their own responsibility, they saw the futility of any other immediate settlement. They hastened to pass the compromise. His absence accomplished what his presence had failed to consummate. The compromise had been bulked into one measure and was defeated. "Omnibus Bills" are never popular. But no sooner had Clay left the senate than the friends of the Union took apart his great structure and gave it piecemeal to the senate. When he returned the last of August, Clay found every one of his recommendations adopted except the one prohibiting slave traffic in the District of Columbia, and this was made a law within a few weeks.

3 Thus was accomplished the last of the great compromises between the variant sections. Clay had for the third time won the honorable title of "The Great Pacificator." His genius, his personality, and his conscience peculiarly fitted him for the task of peacemaker. Through his mastery of parliamentary tactics, he became the most for-

midable antagonist in congress; through his wonderfully winning disposition, he became the lodestone of love and devotion; through his firm and lofty convictions of the necessity of ultimate emancipation, he became the invincible champion of Union and peace. There was nothing dogmatic in Clay's constitution, and when he had laid aside his desire to be president, there remained not a trace of the expediency of egotism. He loved the Union, and he loved peace, and believed that the Union could only be saved by gentle compromise, by the quiet arts of peace. And as he journeyed home to his beloved Lexington, feeble and exhausted after this terrific struggle of eight months for union and peace, over every arch of triumph under which he was carried on the arms of enthusiastic multitudes was written the beautiful precept, "Blessed is the Peacemaker."

Blessed, indeed, could the great orator feel, after he had been welcomed home by his state and his neighbors. Blessed in the quiet repose of peaceful Ashland, blessed in the love of the whole peoples, within whose hearts he had transformed the dread of war into assurance of peace, blessed in his own heart, for his conscience gave sanction to his great work of compromise.

But Clay's judgment was not as sound as his heart. His foresight was foreshortened by his anxiety for peace. A compromise

3 that cost so many concessions, and that demolished so many convictions, was built only upon shifting sands, and when the storms of moral rage, aroused by the enforcement of the fugitive slave law, beat upon that house, it fell, and with the fall came the crash of arms.

Clay was not permitted to see its fall. But the two remaining years that were allotted to him were portent with the ultimate disaster. His trembling hands were kept busy erecting props, to uphold the structure of his compromise, and his voice, enfeebled with age, rose again and again to assure his countrymen that the structure was safe.

Men cried "Peace! Peace!" but in their hearts they knew that there was no peace. The fugitive slave law was the fearful disturber. As long as slavery was strictly confined to the south, the average northern voter did not speculate about the moral wrong of bondage. When the southern hot-heads carried their secession propaganda into congress, the northern Whig was angered, (but when these slaveholders pursued the fainting, panting fugitive into the free states, and dragged him by force back into bondage, then the phlegmatic northerner had his passion inflamed by his conscience, and his resentment was immediate and effective. As long as this object lesson of the worst features of slavery continued to be

enacted before the eyes of the north, how could a compromise be secure?

Even Clay began to doubt the finality of his compromise. In 1851 he joined his Whig colleagues in congress in a pronunciamento declaring that the compromise was sufficient and final. Between the lines, one could read the fears of the signers, that their peremptory declaration was false. When, a month later, Shadrach, a fugitive slave, was wrested from a United States marshal in Boston by a mob of blacks, Clay arose to assure the excited men from the south that the fugitive slave law was generally obeyed, and that only one or two violations were recorded. His tone had in it the suspicions of misgiving, although he succeeded marvelously well in making men sanguine of the virtues of the compromise.

To an invitation to address the citizens of New York, he replied in a long letter, setting forth again, and for the last time, his reasons for believing in the efficiency of the compromise. It was his final extended public utterance, and was an appeal to the south to be reasonable in their demands, and to the north to be patient in their actions.

It was his last public appeal. The hacking cough was not relieved by a sojourn in Cuba, nor did a summer's rest in Ashland restore him to vigor and health. In the fall of 1851 he traveled for the last time over the familiar highways from Lexington to Wash-



ington. He passed all the scenes of former glory. The feeble old man could not but be conscious that it was the last time he was to look upon the familiar landmarks, and the friends that surged around his carriage must have realized that for the last time were they peering into those lustrous eyes, undimmed by combat and by years, and for the last time were they grasping the hand that had been clasped by millions of his enthusiastic followers. He was able to attend only one session of the senate. The scenes of his activity were shifted to his room in the National Hotel. For even sickness could not rob Henry Clay of his leadership. From a sickbed Clay directed his defense of the compromise. His political activities did not cease but he was far from sanguine of the success of his coalition in the coming presidential campaign.

His coalition was, indeed, rapidly falling to pieces. The old Whig issues were no longer of interest to the voter. The Great Issue was avoided by the leaders. The southern Whigs were flocking to the Democratic party, and the "conscience Whigs" were rallying around the new Liberty Party. In congress a majority of the Whigs refused to caucus on the finality of the compromise. Leaders, too, were wanting. Webster never was a party leader. Clay was on the point of death, the new men were half-hearted in their Whigism, and could not agree upon a candidate.

Three men aspired to the nomination. Webster, made unavailable by his greatness and unpopular by his Seventh of March speech; Gen. Scott, put forward by the anti-slavery Whigs, and therefore rejected by the southern wing of the party; and President Fillmore, an eager friend of the compromise, and popular among the pro-slavery Whigs.

For the first time in many years, Clay was not a candidate. He had again been asked by zealous followers, in 1851, to allow his name to be presented, but his answer was unequivocal and direct. The overpowering ambition had been finally crushed. How unfortunate that he had allowed it to abide with him so constantly. It is a great mistake for a public man to set his heart on the presidency. The road to that shining summit of political glory is strewn with broken hearts and shattered hopes.

Clay's advice to the Whigs, that they nominate Fillmore, was rejected by the national convention, which met in Baltimore on June 10. It was a disorderly meeting, a careful observer could see the lines of cleavage widening between the two political hemispheres that were to fall apart within another four years. The south brought along its platform and its candidate. The platform was ratified, but the candidate rejected, and Gen. Scott, a man with anti-slavery convictions, nominated.

It was the last Whig national convention. It nominated a liberty candidate on a slav-

ery platform. While it was thus inviting the discord that led to its ruin, the founder of the party was quietly passing away. Before he died, Clay expressed his approval of the work of the last national convention of the party he had founded. The Democrats, with their candidate, Franklin Pierce, of New Hampshire, "a northern man with southern principles," triumphed at the election. The coalition dissolved, the real issue was espoused by the new Republican party, and the term "Whig" became a name known only to our political history.

On June 29, 1852, Henry Clay died. Neither sickness, nor death, could rob him of the affection of the people. His son Thomas wrote on May 8: "Had you seen, as I have, the evidences of attachment and interest displayed by my father's friends, you could not help exclaiming, as he frequently has done, 'was there ever man had such friends!' The best and first in the land are daily and hourly offering tokens of their love and esteem for him." As in life he had been the center of affection, so in sickness he became the center of tender solicitude, and in death the center of universal sorrow. On July 1, after impressive ceremonies in the senate chamber, attended by senators and representatives, the President and his cabinet, the supreme court and the diplomatic corps, the officers of the army and the navy, the body began its last jour-

ney to the old Kentucky home. Even in death Henry Clay had his progress. The funeral train passed through Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Trenton, New York, Albany, Ithaca, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville. Everywhere were throngs, not exultant in their loud huzzahs, but silent with grief and sorrow. They buried him in Lexington, the little city that had grown great because of his greatness, and that he loved so devotedly.

We cannot but pause and reflect upon the strange vicissitudes and paradoxes of this unfortunate and fascinating man, who was at once the most applauded and most defeated, the most glorified and most humbled man in our history. From the day of his majority, to the very moment of his death, in his seventy-sixth year, he was a leader of men. What contributions to our politics did he make in this half century of unparalleled activity? To determine this we must view his career in its threefold nature, as statesman, as politician, as orator.

The statesmanship of Henry Clay was aggressive, and yet he was on the defensive in nearly every administration under which he served. Reading the history of his day alone, his statesmanship seems an utter failure, yet careful scrutiny will reveal the permanency of his work. The issues to which he dedicated his powers were the tariff, the

bank, and internal improvements. Tariff legislation, from its very nature, cannot be permanent, it rises and falls with the tide of business. In his day the argument of protection to infant industries was logical. The opposition he encountered was from the planters, and with singular blindness he failed to see that it was not agriculture, but slavery, that opposed his American system. His projects for vast systems of canals and turnpikes were forestalled by the invention of the steam engine. If the railway had not woven the country into unity with its network of steel, there can remain no doubt that the waterways and roadways advocated by Clay, would have become a necessity. Of the national bank, it can be said that it is still a problem, inviting the advocacy and the opposition of the most enlightened minds of the land. It is commendation enough to say that Clay's position was not greatly unlike that of Alexander Hamilton and Albert Gallatin, our two greatest masters of finance, and it is sufficient praise to reflect that in the time of our national crisis, the Supreme Court sustained his contention of the power of the federal government to establish such fiscal agencies, and that to-day his own arguments are rehearsed by publicists and financiers, in behalf of a national bank.

His failures were more real in the minor issues that engaged his thought. His public-land prospect was short-sighted, he really

failed to discern the importance of these vast public domains, in spite of his exuberant faith in the unlimited possibilities of the west. His scheme of distributing the public surplus among the various states cannot commend itself to wise statesmanship. His Panama mission suffered a pitiable collapse, and he utterly misjudged the temperament of the South American republics, in his eagerness to defend their liberties against the encroachments of royalty.

His greatest contribution to American statesmanship he made in his heroic endeavors to save the union by compromise. The last resort of hostile convictions is war. The most awful species of war is civil war. Clay dedicated himself with heroic devotion to the averting of civil war. We may say that he failed to see the real issue in his Missouri Compromise, and in the tariff compromise of 1833; that he did not distinguish between economic fallacy and a moral wrong; that his theory of conciliation and forbearance merely put off, until the bloody morrow, the fierce fight that might have been fought to-day; that compromise with such an issue is wicked procrastination. For us these words are lightly spoken; for those who lived and moved in those fervid, intense, ante-bellum days, they were weighted with lead. Clay was superficial. A brilliant man is rarely profound. He did fail to see the gist of the Missouri question and the nullification the-



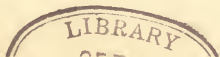
ory. He did fail to peer far enough into the undisclosed future to see that free and bond labor could not endure side by side in a republic. He did fail to make a moral issue of slavery. And his compromises did perish with the years. But let us reflect that with each succeeding compromise he strengthened the sinews of the north. For Calhoun was right when he said that delay weakened slavery and strengthened the free states. While he failed to see that war must ultimately settle the great issue, he shortened the evils of that inevitable struggle, by giving the north time to outstrip its enemy in every activity of life. In the light of history, we may be thankful that the civil war was not precipitated in 1830, or 1833, or 1850.

And yet, how futile seem the fifty years of Henry Clay's statesmanship! His war of 1812 brought us no substantial gain. His compromise of 1820 was repealed in thirty-four years. His compromise of 1833 lasted only twenty years by its own terms. The crowning compromise of 1850 perished after ten miserable years of existence. What product of his statecraft remains as an enduring monument to his genius? We can only reply, that it is the mission of the compromiser to prepare great issues for the fullness of time.

Were his contributions to politics less transitory? He created a party and it was

buried with him; he brought together strange elements in a national coalition, and his combination could not survive him; he was for twenty-five years an aspirant for the presidency, three times as chosen candidate before the people, and twice as rejected candidate before the national convention, and his constant ambition was rewarded only by constant defeat.

While Clay was a chieftain in congress, he was a poor party leader. His political judgment went astray too often to make him safe. He was a magnificent fighter, but he could not discern the proper moment of attack. He was heroic in action, but not judicious in deliberation. He was an imperious parliamentarian, but an unskilled party boss. He grew impatient of party machinery and party discipline was distasteful to him. He hated caucuses, and despised conventions; he deemed them manufactories where little men are inflated into greatness, for party purposes. When running for congress, he ran independently. And he had only one canvass, in 1816, in which he had to contend with opposition. He had voted for the "compensation act," granting congressmen a yearly salary of \$1,500, in place of a per diem wage. This act was unpopular in the west, where the pay was considered extravagant. His opponent was John Pope, a brave soldier, who later became Jackson's governor of Arkansas. The two rivals made



a personal canvass of the three counties in their district, and closed the campaign with a joint meeting in the middle of the district. Here Clay easily triumphed. His eloquence in laying bare the attitude of Pope, the Federalist, on this war of 1812, was potent, and he was reëlected by a majority of 600.

This anecdote illustrates Clay's political methods. A man of his superior endowments despises artifice and conventionality. His politics were personal, his appeals, his onslaughts, were personal. He depended neither on patronage, nor on organization for his prestige, he shone with a native brilliancy that despised reflected light.

But such personal powers cannot be a substitute for a national party organization. Judgment, care, direction, organization, are needed to maintain an army of voters in the battle field. Clay's genius unfitted him for such leadership. In his own candidacies he manifested very poor judgment. He was always in high place when a candidate for the Presidency, as speaker, or as senator. Thus he laid himself open to attack and made enemies. He could not see, or he would not, why unknown men always defeated him. He complained bitterly of this degradation. "If there is no chance for elections, the Gallant Harry of the West will be good enough for nomination, but if there is a chance, the union will be searched for a military man, whose principles are un-

known, to lead the party into fields of patronage." Yet Henry Clay made himself unavailable by his persistent application of misjudgment. The one election that might have brought him the golden crown, he lost by compromising with his better self. His over-anxiety impelled him to write the Alabama letters on Texas. But Clay would never admit that his defeat in 1844 could be attributed to this source. It is strange that he could not see the popular side of a question, and he constantly mistook the plaudits his personality inspired, for applause of the issues he defended. His attitude on the bank question was ill chosen. He might, without jeopardy to his convictions, have postponed his severe hostility to Jackson, until after the election of 1832. His persistence on the old Whig issues after time had made them obsolete, when Texas, Mexico, Oregon were the words that tingled in the ears of the voters, reveal a want of keen political insight. For the rising school of politicians he had only haughty contempt. The tactics of Thurlow Weed, and his henchmen, were as disquieting to his soul as they were destructive to his aspirations.

Clay, as a politician, was too ingenuous. His political talents were those of a commander, but not of a plotter. Thus it was that he could gather a coalition, but he could not lead it to victory; he could command admiration, but he could not command

majorities. His coalition went to pieces on the reefs of slavery.)

Do you ask if he had seen more clearly the real issue at the heart of all these surface agitations, and had boldly espoused the cause of anti-slavery, whether his party could not have been more enduring? I reply, that such espousal in his day would have ruined his influence and dissipated his powers. He might as well have scattered his talents to the four winds. He lived in the day of avoidance, all his great contemporaries avoided the slavery issue. A political coalition is never permanent. Too many diverse opinions are merged for a temporary purpose. These various elements will rub and chafe one another until the friction generates a heat that will prove destructive. Clay's coalition could not be enduring. When the immediate objects for which it was formed were attained, it could not unite on the Great Issue, and it fell to pieces. The various masses that constituted its bulk rearranged themselves into more permanent forms around the slavery issue.

Transitory, therefore, were his attainments in politics. But again, we may say that the politics of a compromiser can be no more lasting than his compromises.

Whatever may be said of the futility of Clay's statesmanship, or the failure of his politics, upon his oratory there can be only one judgment. With the mystery of speech

he wrought miracles of power. The tales that are related of his oratorical triumphs seem more fitted for the pages of Arabian Nights than the prosaic record of American politics. Every endowment of nature intended to enhance the personal power of man over his fellows was lavished upon him. Physically, he was magnificent, tall, lithe, symmetrical; when roused by the passion of his convictions he swayed and moved like the graceful boughs of the elm in a breeze. His head was large and set all the phrenologists agog. His brow was high and magnificently arched. His eyes were small and blue, not lowering, like Webster's, but sunny and kind. When he got excited they seemed to change color. All of his features were as generous in area as his disposition. His nose was large, his ears prominent, his mouth was huge, with remarkable powers of expansion, his arms and legs were long, his feet and hands very ample. In his old age men crowded around him for a handclasp and ladies for a kiss; his hands and mouth were ample for all demands.

His mind was not profound like Webster's, nor narrow like Calhoun's, nor logical like Benton's. It was broad and shallow, and delighted rather in the pleasant ripples of the surface than in the great currents of the abyss. Profundity is not a desideratum to the orator. His effect must be produced instantaneously, not after meditation.



In temperament, Clay was the most lovable of men. He was as winning as a woman, as strong as any man. He was kind, generous, never bitter, or mean; he was tropical in the luxury of his warmth. So magnetic was his personality that it attracted even his bitterest foes. Andrew Jackson was perhaps his only enemy whose hatred was not allayed by the sweetness of Clay's disposition. His temperament was always sanguine. The many clouds that passed the zenith of his skies were transitory, no calamity could shake his faith, no defeat dishearten him. Time did not make him sour, he grew mellow with the passing seasons. His last years were his best. Age did not wither him to parchment, as it did Calhoun, nor fill his soul with gall, as it did Webster's. A man with such a disposition loves people. Clay loved crowds, he was a mixer, a wonderful favorite, a household god.

His home was a museum of gifts. People from every state and territory sent him all imaginable sorts of things. In the National Hotel, where he lived in Washington, he had a cellar wherein the landlord stored the food that was sent to him. There was constantly on hand a plethora of wines, fruits, vegetables, fowl, game, venison, beef, mutton, every conceivable edible that the imagination of a gastronomer can conjure up. These gifts he would dispense at table, discussing interestingly the traits of the donor, or de-

scribing minutely the locality that produced the articles. Often, in the hotel dining room, after a meal, the people would move their chairs around him to hear him discourse upon some favorite theme. When he began to speak, whether in the parlor or on the platform, in the senate or in the open air, he held all men in the hollow of his hand. His was preëminently the oratorical temperament.

And his voice lent every aid to his temperament. His voice was a marvel. If we are to believe the wonderful stories that are told of its marvelous power, we can compare it only to an organ, or rather to a full orchestra. It could range all the octaves and command every pitch. It could whisper or roar, sing lullabys or shriek, it could be delicious, sweet, insinuating, or wild, terrible, denouncing, gentle as a breeze, or fierce as a tornado. Its carrying powers were as remarkable as its quality. He loved to speak out of doors, where he could reach the multitudes by the thousands. This voice Clay had under perfect control. He was never declamatory.

With such a body, such a mind, such a temperament and such a voice, his powers of speech would yet have failed had he not known how to use them. His mastery of his talents was complete and absolute. He marshalled words into sonorous sentences without effort. The flowers of speech sprung into bloom along every pathway of his thought.

The colorings of his imagery were as glorious and natural as the tintings of an oriental fabric. He never seemed to exhaust the resources of his eloquence. After his greatest speeches, those on the tariff of 1833, the protest of 1834, the sub-treasury bill of 1838, and the compromise of 1850, every listener felt that were it necessary the orator could redouble his efforts and not drain the reserve power of his talents.

His eloquence was perfectly natural. It was not gleaned from books, but from experience. He used with facility every weapon in the arsenal of speech. He could be sarcastic and galling, could inveigh and taunt, could be joyous and solemn, could be serious and burlesque. While he lacked Webster's logic, or Chatham's force, he excelled both in the diversity of his attacks and the natural grace of his delivery, because he was an orator by the gift of nature, not by the culture of man. Thus his speech was always easy, conversational, graceful, dignified, though never pompous, as that of a mere stump orator. He never seemed to try to form sentences, because effort was superfluous to his talents.

~~He was an actor, and spoke with his whole~~ body. He was impressive even when he paused in his speech to take a pinch of snuff or use his handkerchief. His gestures were always manly, as was his sentiment and his vocabulary. He always appealed to the

noble, the lofty, never to the prejudices or to vulgar passions. His appeal was to the greatness of man, not to his littleness. |

He was always dramatic. When he denounced Jackson for appointing his servile follower, Amos Kendall, superintendent of the state bank, he ended a withering accusation by stretching his arms full length, rising on tiptoe and with a terrible frown and a voice thundering disgust to the vaulted roof of the old senate chamber, and yelling: "An agent was sent out to sound the local institutions as to the terms on which they would receive deposits, an agent was sent out," and the voice rose to a shriek, "*and such an agent!*"

Some time later, when a Virginia Democrat had been named by the President as Ambassador to England, one Whig vote was necessary to confirm the appointment. One of the leading Whigs was rumored to have made a bargain and had promised to deliver the necessary vote. Clay heard of this on the very day the vote was to be taken. Before the roll call he arose and began to dissect the life of the proposed ambassador. When he had done so, he pulled himself up to his full height, turned full on the suspect, transfixed him with his penetrating eye, and screamed: "And now, what *Whig* would vote for this man? And what Whig would *promise* to vote for this man? And what Whig, having promised, would *dare* to keep

that promise?" The renegade Whig slunk out of the room, his promise broken.

On the Monday following Calhoun's death, a vast crowd sought the senate chamber. Webster, Clay and Benton were to speak. Clay arose and spoke quietly, dwelling largely upon personal reminiscences. Gradually his speech became more animated. Then turning to the vacant chair, he simply asked: "When shall that great vacancy be filled?" The manner of his asking left room for only one reply, and everyone within hearing of that marvelous voice involuntarily answered "never."

In his last great debate, on the compromise of 1850, he showed forth his adroitness as a floor manager, and his personal magnetism. It was a daily fight, he was constantly harassed by Benton, the leader of the opposition. One day he arose to make a motion, he stated it in his sweetest voice, and in a tranquil manner asked its adoption. Then he paused, looked across the chamber where Benton sat, glowering and unmoved. Their eyes met. Clay lifted his arm and shook his finger menacingly. "And now let us see," he exclaimed in majestic tones, "whether the pacification of this country is longer to be hindered." He shook his broad shoulders like a lion, and rose to magnificent heights. The sentences poured forth as in former days. But his strength failed him and he was soon compelled to call back his ener-

gies. "Ah," he said, "I left a sick room this morning, at the call of my country."

The effect of such an unpremeditated, such an unlimited stream of eloquence, was perfectly natural. It swept every one onward in its resistless torrent. No other orator in American history, perhaps not in the history of any land, spoke to such crowds as surged around the platforms where Henry Clay was advertised to speak. The effect of his words upon the multitudes was miraculous. They wept, they shouted for joy, they wrung their hands in grief, they tossed their hats into the air in deliriums of frenzy; they would listen with deathlike stillness to his whispers, and would respond to his thunders with yells and shrieks. He swayed them in unison with his sentiments. They waxed wroth with his temper, they wept with him, they laughed with him, they grew scornful as he grew sarcastic, and enthusiastic as he rose to the majesty of conviction. They followed him from town to town reluctant to say farewell to the enchanter. **I**f Henry Clay could have gathered all the voters of the land under one roof, he would have been unanimously chosen president by acclamation. **A**nd this was not the power of words, nor of logic, nor of sentiment. It was the power of personality, the subtle influence of the actor-orator. His best speeches were his impromptu efforts. It is a matter of regret that they were spoken before the days of



stenographers. Such of his speeches as are preserved for us, do not reveal the power that was pent up in thier spoken sentences. The dynamics of Clay's oratory lay in his delivery, in his acting. Wherever his voice was heard there was rapture and delight.

And these powers shone resplendent amidst a galaxy of brilliant contemporaries. Think of Clay's co-workers! There were the polished orators Preston, Corwin, Everett, Hayne and Prentiss; there were the debaters Wright, Douglas, Berrien; there were the renowned advocates Pinkney, West and Choate; there were the famous statesmen Adams, Benton and Cass. Among those giants he moved. To them he was a leader.

There were two other men then active upon the stage of public life whose talents linked them to Clay in an immortal trinity of genius, Webster and Calhoun. We cannot reflect upon that stirring middle period of our history that brought forth nationalism out of the throes of sectional violence, without having these three leaders constantly before our mind. How diverse were their talents, yet how preëminent; how varied their convictions, yet how sincere. Around this trinity of leaders clustered the other men of the time like satellites around a sun. In them were incarnate the three ruling principles that sought victory at the people's tribunes. Calhoun, the incarnation of state-rights; Webster, the incarnation of the

Union, "one and inseparable"; Clay, the incarnation of the Union, "pacified and reconciled." Clay was the mediator between Calhoun and Webster, between New England and South Carolina. Calhoun was distinguished for his logic, Webster for his arguments, Clay for his eloquence. Calhoun planned disunion by a logic so insinuating, so subtle, that it captured the learned as well as the unlearned. Webster defended the Union with constitutional arguments, so true, so lofty, and so majestic that they will be a never failing source of patriotism for all time. Clay pleaded for the Union with such moderation and such glowing eloquence that his compromises were adopted, and he was hailed as the savior of the Union. Calhoun discerned in slavery no wrong but a positive good; Webster perceived in slavery a constitutional menace; Clay saw in slavery an institutional danger. The ultimate goal of Calhoun's logic was secession. Had Webster carried his constitutional argument to its final conclusion, he would have been in accord with Chase and Seward, ready to defend the Union and the constitution with the force of arms. To Clay, there was only one ultimate goal, peace, compromise, and by its very nature, that goal could never be ultimate. Calhoun died at his post, before the last compromise was passed. Within a decade, his state led the ranks of secession, putting to the test of war the philosophy of

her greatest son. Two years later Clay joined his great antagonist. He saw his compromise adopted by the two great parties the very summer of his death. His closing eyes might have read the signs of national dissolution, but he died in the faith that his compromise was final. Four months later Webster followed his great compeer; the Union he had so profoundly loved seemed secure, but his heart was heavy with the burden of defeat, and his mind filled with the foreboding of disunion.

The Union is the answer to this trinity of logic, argument and eloquence. To the logic of Calhoun it answers, the whole is greater than a part; the argument of Webster it affirms with an amended constitution; to the eloquence of Clay it responds, while the spirit of compromise is beautiful and lovely, there can be no enduring conciliation between right and wrong.

STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS

DEFENDER OF STATE'S RIGHTS AND OF  
NATIONALISM









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## DEFENDER OF STATE'S RIGHTS AND OF NATIONALISM

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POLITICAL philosophy does not make a nation until it is written in living letters and recorded in the book of experience. The theory of a union of independent states bound by an indissoluble bond to a national government was unquestionably the thought of a majority of the constitutional fathers. Had economic and social conditions been uniform in every portion of our domain there would probably have been no necessity for a severe struggle in working out the practical realization of this theory. But, unfortunately, this uniformity did not exist. One part of the nation held that the component units of the nation were so utterly free that they could do as they chose; another part held that the states were free in municipal affairs, but unfree in national affairs. One section believed that state rights extended even into the realm of state anarchy, where every commonwealth could break away from every other and establish itself in isolation; the other section believed that self-destruction was not one of the liberties contemplated

by the voluntary union of the original thirteen states. One school of political philosophy assumed that the constitution was a mere transitory compact; the opposing school affirmed that the constitution was a solemn and eternal obligation. One coterie of statesmen maintained that we are an aggregation of independent units; the other maintained that we are a nation of co-equal commonwealths. The real issue was, Are we a confederation or a nation? Does an eternal and necessary gravitation unite these states into a galaxy of stars, or does chance decree that we are only a temporary group of comets, thrown into company by coincidence?

One hundred years were necessary to solve the question. Every conceivable method of adjustment between the diverse elements was attempted. The great compromises all failed, because the ultimate basis of the question was a moral **B**asis, and there can be no lasting cement between right and wrong. The final struggle was made inevitable. After compromise, war. But before the civil war was actually begun, there took place that fierce, final and frantic attempt of slavery to fasten itself upon the territories. In "squatter sovereignty" you behold the ultimate logic of state rights. And Stephen A. Douglas was the brilliant champion of this territorial home rule.

Douglas was born in Brandon, Vermont, on the 23rd day of April, 1813. His father

was a skilful physician, and his mother a woman of unusual mental prowess. The father died when Stephen was only two months old. A bachelor brother of the widow provided a home for them. Stephen attended the village school and grew into a reckless little dare-devil, who would swim the mill-pond to spite his teacher and pommel his playmates for sheer love of combat. He was a bright boy with his books, and wished to go to college. But his uncle was "close," and instead of going to college Stephen, at the age of fifteen, was apprenticed to a cabinet maker in Middlebury. His master was a good-natured deacon, who allowed the apprentice boy time to read his favorite books, the lives of Napoleon and of Cæsar and of Alexander, heroes whose traditions he wove into every phase of his own career. In truth he was the Little Napoleon of the village. He led the young people in combat and debate. The prophecy of his babyhood that he would grow into a great giant remained unfulfilled. He became the "Little Giant" instead, scarcely five feet in height, and while he weighed, tradition says, 14 pounds when he was born, he could scarcely summon 140 pounds when he developed into manhood. Nor was his health robust. Throughout his early life he was compelled to suffer bodily discomforts. But Stephen in spite of his pygmy stature and frail health was remarkably muscular and fond of a fight. One

night, on his way home from some social festivity, he whipped every youth in the village because of some insult offered his sweetheart. The actions of the man were foretold by the predilections of the boy. His apprenticeship lasted only two years; it was cut short by his illness. He returned to Brandon and studied in the local academy for one year.

About this time his mother married a lawyer of some means and Stephen was sent to the Canandaigua Academy, in New York, a school then famous throughout that section of the country. Here he studied three years with great zeal and success. The classics and forensics especially called forth his enthusiasm and he became the leader in all debates and speaking contests. During his leisure moments he read law.

In June, 1833, he journeyed to the new west in quest of health and fortune. When he reached Cleveland, Ohio, his health succumbed completely to the prevalent malaria. Acting on the advice of his physician he journeyed farther, immediately on his recovery. But he fared little better in Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis. He started northward from St. Louis for Chicago, but when he arrived at Jacksonville, Ill., he found his funds reduced to thirty-seven cents. He was compelled to sell some of his books for bread, and to look for work instead of await clients. He heard that in

the little village of Winchester, a few miles distant from Jacksonville, there was need of a school, and so thither he went, early in November, 1833. Good fortune awaited him in this obscure frontier hamlet. A country auctioneer who was plying his vocation on the village green, caught sight of young Douglas and beckoned him. "Can you figure at \$2.00 a day?" he asked. "And board!" added the bankrupt. The bargain was struck and Douglas became the clerk of the auctioneer. This position served as a natural introduction for the prospective schoolmaster. The auction lasted three days and by that time the young man had won his way into the hearts of the villagers by his ready wit, his vigorous defense of President Jackson, then the idol of the frontiersman, and his ability at figures. He organized a school in the village and it proved as popular as its master. It was in the days of "boarding around," and Douglas displayed a remarkable faculty for ingratiating himself into the hearts of his patrons.

That winter he was admitted to the bar and the following year he was elected prosecuting attorney. His home county, Morgan county, was a Whig stronghold, and the young politician now addressed himself to the task of making it Democratic. He set out to organize every township, and knit these local organizations into a firm county machine. The custom had been to allow



several candidates in each party to stand for the various offices. Indeed, whoever wanted to run for office could do so without any particular party sanction. This loose, haphazard method Douglas discarded, and in its place he put his compact, united organization, that chose the candidates and directed the campaign. This vigorous party discipline wrested victory from the Whigs, Douglas himself being among the victors, the choice of his neighbors as their representative in the legislature.

Four months later President Van Buren appointed Douglas register of the land office at Springfield, and from the vantage ground of the state capital, with the prestige of victory and federal endorsement, he organized every congressional district and county in the state upon the plan of the Morgan County Democracy. This became the "Douglas Machine," that served as the practical basis of the political advancement of its creator.

In 1837 he secured the Democratic nomination for congress in the northern district of his state. He was not yet 25 years old, but he reached the requisite age before election day. There were 36,000 votes cast. It is probable that Douglas had a majority, but twenty ballots were thrown out by the canvassers because his name was misspelled, and his Whig opponent, John T. Stuart, a law partner of Abraham Lincoln, was declared elected by a majority of five votes.

For three years Douglas devoted himself to his law practice. He became a successful criminal lawyer, winning the juries and freeing the culprits with such uniformity that his talents almost became a menace to society.

In 1840 he became secretary of state, and a year later he was appointed to the supreme bench of Illinois. This position he held for three years, when he was elected to congress for three successive terms. His first majority was 400, his second 1900, and his third 3000. In 1847, before the expiration of his third term, he was elected United States senator, which position he held until his death.

The fourteen years that intervened between his advent in Illinois and his entrance into the United States senate served to mature the political methods of Douglas, together with his political theories, his ambitions and his personality.

Of his political methods, it must be said that he united the wiles of a machine politician with the ardent temperament of a good fellow and the natural talents of a successful public speaker. This blending makes a formidable politician. For when talent lags, and good fellowship sickens, then there remains the inexorable, iron organization. Douglas remains one of the great political organizers of our history.

His political theories were absorbed from Andrew Jackson. He was first of all a Demo-

Just when Douglas became conscious of his consuming ambition to become President is not apparent. The desire probably gradually came upon him, as he rose, in marvelous rapidity from one position of political eminence to another. But long before his first term in the senate expired he was mas-

tered by this ambition. To its overlordship he was willing to submit everything except honor and conviction. It is commonly believed that he even surrendered principle and integrity in his Kansas-Nebraska struggle. Unfortunately, in those fateful days, he did dally with compromise and coquette with the slavery extensionists. But in the light of his subsequent career, his unswerving consistency in adhering to the principles of popular sovereignty and his loyalty to the Union, let us not accuse him of prostituting principle to ambition.

His nature abounded in the personal traits that made the successful frontier politician, and the early circuit of the frontier brought out these traits in richest profusion. It was the olden time of "Merrie Illinois," when lawyers on horseback followed the circuit judges from town to town. Hospitality and familiarity were universal. Kindness abounded with the rough backwoods humor and banter of travel and tavern. Feats of physical skill were esteemed above logic and song and story were more desired than philosophy.

The traditions of those days assure us that Douglas amply fulfilled all these requirements. His physical courage and strength were as unusual as his stature. When on the bench, he tried the case of one Joe Smith, a notorious murderer. A wild mob gathered in the jail-yard, erected a gibbet, and pressed

into the court room to lay their unholy hands upon the prisoner in the box. The sheriff shrank from his post when he saw the determined avengers. But judge Douglas was equal to the occasion. "Sheriff, clear the court room!" he yelled. The cowardly sheriff hesitated. The judge shouted: "Mr. Harris, I appoint you sheriff. Appoint your deputies and clear this court room right now!" Harris was a stalwart Kentuckian. The peremptory and decisive action of the judge cowed the mob and the room was cleared without a struggle. The judge had no legal right to appoint a sheriff, but Douglas never allowed a technicality or a ceremony to stand in the way of action or necessity.

His muscular strength was phenomenal. The pygmy, who was often held upon the knees of his clients or constituents, as they familiarly consulted with him, was as powerful as an ox. One day when boarding a Mississippi flatboat he was annoyed by a great, brawling, rawboned braggart. "Who are you, my big chicken?" Douglas asked. "I am a high pressure steamer," the bully answered. "And I am a snag," said the judge as he picked up the fellow and pitched him into the mud.

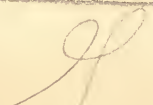
If he abounded in that physical prowess that delighted the early settlers he much more abounded in the personal traits that won their affection and compelled their



admiration. He was approachable to all. His familiarity robbed him of dignity. He was kind to a fault, a profuse story teller, adroit at cards, responsive to appeal, had a good memory for names, was not overburdened with egotism in its obtrusive form, and his ever ready tongue won him always the attention of the throng. He had a wonderfully winning personality, and few could escape the captivating magnetism of his presence.

In spite of his diminutive stature, he was handsome in appearance. His head was massive and covered with a magnificent shock of jet black hair, which he tossed back when speaking, with a kingly gesture. His features were large and well proportioned. His eyes were restless, nothing escaped their vigilance as they flitted about from object to object, and when they fixed their gaze they were piercing. His voice was superbly adapted to the needs of outdoor speaking. When on the platform, or in the court room, his manner was bold and challenging. He never evaded a conflict. It was this leonine attitude, together with his tremendous powers of speech and his stunted height, that christened him early in his career as "The Little Giant."

Intellectually he was superficial. He was not a scholar. Neither was he a mere rhetorician. But he had a flow of speech, unadorned and unpretentious, captivating only





in its astounding, never-failing volume, that proved a ready substitute for logic and profundity.

In temperament Douglas was imperious, self-willed and unbending. He was susceptible to flattery, coveted glory, and sought fame. These less fortunate traits he was capable of concealing underneath his talents for good fellowship. But in his relentless pursuit for the prize of his calling they bore a supreme part. For the reader must ever bear in mind that Douglas was primarily a politician. He could never forget that he needed votes. He courted big majorities. He played for votes as a skilled angler plays for fish.

This strong-willed, courageous, ambitious, kind-souled, voluble, hand-shaking politician had one great gift, the gift of debate; and he was entirely possessed of the homely habit of constant industry. This industry perfected his gift into genius, and lifted him into national leadership in the hour of the nation's great peril. It is a strange anomaly of politics that the place of Henry Clay, the Great Pacificator, the founder and leader of the Whig party, was taken by Stephen A. Douglas, the Little Giant of the States Rights Cause, the leader of the Democratic party. Such can be the paradox of politics, for in logic and in philosophy, if not in name and in party jargon, Douglas was the lawful suc-

cessor of Clay, rather than of Calhoun. For Calhoun's theory of state rights terminated in nullification. Douglas's theory of popular sovereignty terminated in municipal autonomy, but an autonomy held together under the unifying web of nationalism. While Douglas carried state rights into the territories, he never adhered to the opinion that a territory or a state could leave the Union.

It is necessary to understand this great difference between the fatal state rights views of Calhoun and the state rights views of Douglas, if we are to gain a true conception of his life and of the stupendous political movements in which he was a leader. Calhoun carried state's rights to the brink of disunion, and was willing to push his South Carolina into the abyss. Douglas carried state rights to the issue of war, but was unwilling to allow one state or territory to leave the Union. Calhoun loved his state more than his nation. Douglas loved his nation more than his theory, his state, or his ambition.

When he entered the house of representatives in 1843 he had paid little attention to the slavery issue. His activities had been confined to his state. He was a Jackson Democrat of the most radical species, accepting without doubt or question every utterance of Jackson as dogma and every act as justified. His first notable achieve-

ment in congress was his speech in defense of Jackson, and in favor of the bill refunding the fine Judge Hall had imposed upon the General in 1814 for declaring martial law in New Orleans. Jackson cherished this speech and wrote upon the margin of the copy he filed away with his papers: "This speech constitutes my defense. I lay it aside as an inheritance for my grandchildren." And when the following year Douglas called at "The Hermitage" the Sage bade him double welcome and quite overwhelmed him with kindness.

During his tenure in the house, Douglas developed into a remarkable committee worker and floor leader. He displayed that capacity for turning from politics to statecraft, changing from politician to statesman, that has characterized many of our great public men. His labors were as ardent as they were unceasing, and as painstaking as they were brilliant. He led the Democrats in those important movements, the annexation of Texas, the war with Mexico, the "Conquest of Oregon."

He entered the senate with the prestige of a party chieftain. Every weapon in the arsenal of debate he had perfected by usage, and every strategy in the art of political warfare he had mastered by experience. He was only 34 years old, brilliant, valiant, restless, liberal, the idol of the young, the pet of the old. It is probable that the desire to

become President began to infuse itself into his veins when he entered the senate and took his seat with the great men of the land.

[We will not do his political sagacity injustice and say that he did not shape his career as senator so as to avoid the Scylla of slavery and the Charybdis of abolitionism.] Nor is it necessary to subscribe to the view commonly held that he abandoned honest convictions and did violence to his conscience when he announced his theory of popular sovereignty and thrust "Bleeding Kansas" into the lurid foreground of secession and rebellion. For, if we trace with care his utterances upon the question of territorial rights and slavery, from the debate on the Wilmot Proviso, to the day of his death, we will find a consistent adhesion to the principle of territorial home rule.]

These principles were first foreshadowed in his speeches opposing the adoption of the Wilmot Proviso. He contended that in the organizing of territorial governments the question of slavery should not be broached at all. Slavery was a purely domestic institution, and it was no concern of congress whether or not it were allowed in a state or territory. The people of every territory must decide that question for themselves. This was his attitude in the debate on the Wilmot Proviso. He never relinquished this opinion. He did expand it in 1854, he elaborated it, and perfected it into a consist-

ent and well-wrought political theory, but he never abandoned it. And the concrete upon which he builded the structure of this theory of state autonomy was the proposition that slavery was a purely domestic institution.

Douglas was made chairman of the senate committee on territories. This important position made him the leader in the movement to organize territorial governments in the domains acquired through the Mexican war. This brings us to the memorable year 1850, when California asked admission to the Union, when the north determined that slavery should not infest those virgin lands, and the south threatened disunion if the barriers surrounding the new territories were made impassable to slavery. It was Douglas who prepared the various bills, in his committee, that were introduced to meet the demands of both contestants, and it was Douglas who suggested to Clay the fortunate compromise that bears the name of the great Kentuckian.

In the original bill, Douglas avoided all reference to slavery. When the anti-slavery senators proposed their various amendments, he opposed them. The final bill, as is well known, provided for the restriction of slavery.

Douglas in his speech of June 3rd, clearly set forth his views: "In respect to African slavery, the position that I have ever taken

has been, that this and all other questions relating to the domestic affairs and domestic policy of the territories ought to be left to the decision of the people themselves. I would therefore have much preferred that the bill should have remained as it was reported from the committee on territories, with no provision on the subject of slavery.

"And, sir, is an institution to be fixed upon a people in opposition to their unanimous opinion? I, for one, think that such ought not to be the case. I desire no provision whatever in respect to slavery in the territories. I wish to leave the people of the territories free to enact such laws as they please."

The legislature of Illinois had instructed him to vote for an explicit prohibition of slavery in all the territories. The Abolitionists of the state knew the views that he held and believed that his uncompromising nature would rather resign than yield to pressure. But Douglas did not resign. When the roll was called on the amendment prohibiting slavery, he arose and explained to the senate that he was now going to cast the vote of his constituents, not his own vote; that he did so because he knew the amendment would be lost anyway; that he did not deem the friction between himself and his constituents of a grave enough nature to demand his resignation. So he voted "aye." Thus the politician found a way to placate both his conscience and his constituents.



On his return to Chicago, he found the compromise very unpopular and himself the denounced and hated Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, of the free state of Illinois. The Abolitionists had organized to defy the fugitive slave law. They controlled pulpit and press, they placarded the city, they induced the city council to pass an ordinance relieving all citizens and officers and the police from the binding force of these laws, on the ground that they were venal and inhuman. On the evening following this radical action of the council, a great mass meeting was held. It boisterously endorsed the revolutionary action of the city council, and amid deafening cheers resolutions were passed commending violent resistance to the Federal law, and denouncing in bitterest terms the Illinois statesmen who had voted for the compromise.

Douglas was the only member of the Illinois delegation then in Chicago. He attended the meeting, and after the passage of the resolutions asked to be heard. Amidst the profoundest silence he announced that on the following evening he would address the citizens of Chicago on the compromise and would answer every objection that had been raised against it. Jeers and hisses were the echo of his challenge. But a tremendous throng gathered the following night to hear his defense. And Douglas was their complete master. One by one he met the ob-

jections raised by the Abolitionists; he answered the questions asked by his hearers; he defended the theory of state rights and the philosophy of compromise; he pleaded the supremacy of law and the absolute necessity of abiding by its mandates. /The following extract from his speech is very important for our purpose, because it reveals clearly that he believed the compromise was based upon his own principle of home rule.

He thus explained his attitude: "These measures are predicated on the great fundamental principle that every people ought to possess the right of forming and regulating their own internal concerns and domestic institutions in their own way. If those who emigrate to the territories have the requisite intelligence and honesty to enact laws for the government of white men I know of no reason why they should not be competent to legislate for the negro. If they are sufficiently enlightened to make laws for the protection of life, liberty and property, of morals and education, to determine the relation of husband and wife, of parent and child, I am not aware that it requires any higher degree of civilization that regulates the affairs of master and servant. My votes and acts have been in accordance with this view."

He closed his speech by offering a series of resolutions upholding the federal law and repudiating the action of the city council.

The meeting closed with great cheers given for Douglas, for the constitution, and for "our glorious Union." The following night the city council rescinded its action.

It was a great triumph and a purely personal victory. Six months before, Daniel Webster, barred from Faneuil Hall, was forced to defend his Seventh of March speech in the open air. He did not compel his constituents to relent.

So John Randolph in 1813 was threatened by a Virginia mob because he defied his constituents. He told them: "I understand that I am to be assailed and insulted to-day if I attempt to address the people. I am told that a mob has been gathered for that purpose. Now, my Bible teaches me that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, but that the fear of man is the consummation of folly." His courage and noble defiance failed to reëlect him.

And so Edmund Burke defied the wishes of his constituents in Bristol, admonishing them: "I did not obey your instructions. No, I conformed rather to the instructions of Truth and Nature and maintained your interests against your opinions, with a constancy that became me." He was retired from office by their wrath.

But Douglas dispelled the prejudices of his constituents and transformed their antagonism into hearty support. The threatened division of his party in Illinois he

averted, and he was triumphantly returned to the senate in 1852.

The prestige of this triumph augmented the fervor of his following in their desire to nominate him for the Presidency in 1852. The national Democratic convention met at Baltimore in June. Douglas was only thirty-nine years old and the adored leader of the younger element in his party. These youthful friends, in their eager haste to honor their idol, overstepped the bounds of propriety. They secured control of several influential papers, including the "*Democratic Review*," a monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the party. In this journal the young hot-heads published a series of articles attacking the older party leaders in very undignified and undiplomatic and unwise language. They attempted to show that the "old fogies" had outlived their usefulness and were "in the way." They called themselves "Young-America," and Cass, Butler, Buchanan and Marcy they called "hucksters," "old clothes horses," and other such un-called-for names. This was poor preparation for an onslaught upon the convention. They found that their hot zeal, while consuming their own reason, had filled all the conservatives with unyielding prejudice. They could make no alliance with either Cass, Marcy, or Buchanan, the other candidates. It was Douglas against the field. He received twenty votes on the first ballot

and ninety-two on the thirtieth. Then his strength declined. Cass received 131 votes. Marcy's highest was 98, and Buchanan's 104. But if the "fogies" were unbending, so also was "Young America." As frequently happens in our nominating conventions, a "dark horse" was brought in, and on the forty-ninth ballot Franklin Pierce was nominated by an almost unanimous vote.

The defeat stung Douglas's pride, and his juvenile following was crestfallen. They realized that their intemperate campaign had defeated their favorite. It is probable that this defeat effectually barred the White House door to the brilliant Douglas, for it put all his rivals on their mettle, and gave them time to plot his overthrow, as we shall see, in 1856. It also had some effect upon his attitude toward the Kansas-Nebraska legislation.

This legislation forms the pivotal point in Douglas's career. His attitude toward it brought upon him the immediate and relentless censure of the anti-slavery Whigs, the ultimate disapprobation and alienation of the slavery extensionists, the quick condemnation of his constituency; it brought him neither the electoral vote of the south nor the undivided Democratic vote of the north; it robbed him of the fealty of many friends, and brought him the support of not one enemy. For its unhappy author it has been the unremitting source of censure from

historian and biographer. The phantom of Kansas-Nebraska even to-day pursues the name of the unfortunate politician and makes of popular sovereignty a mockery.

This destructive tide of censure, this cumulative condemnation, this relentless criticism is heaped upon him because his territorial bill repealed the Missouri compromise of 1820, because it opened the flood gates of anarchy and civil war in Kansas, because it tore asunder a great and glorious political party, and because it hastened the bloody day of reckoning for slavery. It is the belief of historians, as it was the judgment of his contemporaries, that Douglas framed this measure in contradiction of his avowed principles and for the purpose of placating and gaining the votes of the south; that he sold the birthright of conscience for a mess of political pottage. This is a most serious charge, and it is necessary to trace the steps that led to the perfection of the repeal.

The key to American politics from 1820 to 1860 is the institution of slavery. The reader must constantly bear in mind that with each recurring decade the advocates of slavery became bolder and more insatiate, and looked forward to new fields for the spread of their system of slave labor. Thus it happened that whenever new territory was added to our national domain, the slavery extensionists made frantic efforts to secure the recognition of slavery within its



precincts. The first great addition of territory to the nation was the Louisiana Purchase. The admission of Missouri, a state carved out of the purchase, precipitated the memorable struggle that ended in the adoption of the Missouri compromise of 1820. The second vast addition of territory, we acquired by conquest from Mexico. This was a pro-slavery acquisition, and when the time came to admit California, the first fruits of that conquest, the slavery leaders again fought desperately for the extension of their peculiar institution. The compromise of 1850 restored peace, and both sides expressed themselves as fairly satisfied.

These compromises were regarded as final. Yet any one who carefully noted the drift of affairs could discern that they could not be final. For the compromise of 1850 was clearly an advance upon that of 1820. But, at the time, no one cared to disturb the pleasant tranquillity of sentiment, and both parties professed the finality of the compromise. Every one wanted the slavery question to be at rest. Douglas joined in this universal chorus of approval. In 1851 he said in a speech in the senate: "I wish to state that I have determined never to make another speech upon the slavery question; and I will now add the hope that the necessity for it will never exist. \* \* So long as our opponents do not agitate for repeal or modification of [the compromises],

why should we agitate for any purpose? We claim that the compromise [of 1850] is a final settlement. Is a final settlement open to discussion and agitation and controversy by its friends?" And in 1849 he declared that the Missouri Compromise had "an origin akin to the constitution," and that it was "canonized in the hearts of the American people as a sacred thing, which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb."

Douglas, like most of his contemporaries, did not realize that slavery was a festering sore, always probed by its nurses and constantly discharging its loathsome, poisonous gangrene; that it was incurable and must be cut out, completely eradicated, before the nation could be rid of slavery-eruptions.

The admission of California and the building up of the west brought the direct occasion for the repeal of the compromise. The enchanted valleys of the Golden State drew toward them constant streams of emigrants. Oregon and Minnesota, both newly organized territories, attracted the more prosaic pioneers, the homesteaders; while the mines of New Mexico and Utah, also newly formed territories, lured the more romantic seeker after fortune. Between these far-distant regions and the Louisiana Purchase lay a vast strip of territory set aside as the final rendezvous of the Red Man. Into these res-

ervations broke the ever increasing flood of immigration. Through the realm of the Indian led the well-worn routes of travel. It was evident that to the enormous increase in the number of western immigrants, the government must provide protection. No one knew this better than Douglas; there was no more ardent lover of the boundless west in congress than the chairman of the Committee on Territories, and upon him devolved the task of solving the problem. The simplest solution was the organizing of a territorial government that would embrace the lands lying between Missouri and Utah and New Mexico. What should be the status of slavery in this new territory? The compromise of 1820 drew the free line westward from Missouri on the parallel of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ . Would Douglas recognize this line in his territorial bill?

The first Nebraska bill was introduced into the house on February 2, 1853, by Richardson, of Illinois, chairman of the territorial committee, and an intimate friend and political adviser of Douglas. The new territory was bounded on the east by the Missouri River, on the west by the Rocky Mountains, on the south by  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , or the Southern Missouri line, and on the north by  $43^{\circ}$ , or nearly the present northern line of Iowa. There was not much interest taken in the bill. Some doubt was expressed as to its utility, because only five or

six hundred people lived in the vast domain; the answer was that it was meant to protect "our commerce, and the fifty or sixty thousand emigrants who annually cross the plains." Objection was also made that much of the land was Indian reservation, and the titles had not been quieted; the answer was the territory had been made so all-embracing, that it might include all the routes of travel between the coast and the Mississippi. Of slavery, there was little said. One congressman asked Giddings, of Ohio, a member of the Territorial Committee, why the ordinance of 1787 was not incorporated in the bill. The answer was significant. Giddings was, at that time, the most famous and advanced anti-slavery member of the house. He answered that inasmuch as the southern boundary was  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , the territory was included in the compromise of 1820. This compromise "stands perpetually," he said, "and I do not think that this act would receive any increased validity by a re-enactment. There I leave the matter. It is very clear that the territory included in this treaty [the Louisiana Purchase treaty] must be forever free unless the law be repealed." There was little more said about slavery, and on the 10th of February the bill passed.

In the senate Douglas's committee reported it back without amendment. It did not come up for discussion until the last

night of the session. Douglas was its only champion. Here, as in the house, the question of Indian titles and of the paucity of settlers were the powerful objections, while a general apathy made it apparent that the members cared nothing for the bill. But here, again, significant mention was made of the status of slavery in the territory, this time by a virulent pro-slavery champion, Senator Atchison, of Missouri, the same Atchison who became the instigator of the border ruffians a few years later, and after whom the leading slavery stronghold in Kansas was named. He spoke in favor of the bill. He had originally opposed the measure, he said, for two reasons: One was the cloud upon the title. "Another was, the Missouri compromise, or, as it is commonly called, the slavery restriction. It was my opinion at that time—and I am not now very clear on that subject—that the law of congress, when the state of Missouri was admitted to the union, excluding slavery from the territory of Louisiana, north of 36° 30', would be enforced in that territory unless it was specially rescinded; and, whether that law was in accordance with the constitution of the United States or not, it would do its work, and that work would be to preclude slaveholders from going into that territory. But when I came to look into that question, I found that there was no prospect, no hope of a repeal of the Missouri

compromise excluding slavery from that territory. \* \* \* I have always been of the opinion that the first great error committed in the political history of this country was the ordinance of 1787, rendering the Northwest Territory free territory. The next great error was the Missouri compromise. But they are both irremediable. We must submit to them. I am prepared to do it. It is evident that the Missouri compromise cannot be repealed. So far as that question is concerned we might as well agree to the admission of this territory now as next year, or five or ten years hence." After this interesting delivery Douglas made his final plea, remaining silent on the slavery question. The bill was tabled on the last night of the session. Both in the house and the senate the south was against the bill.

Early in the next session, Senator Dodge of Iowa introduced a similar bill and this was referred to Douglas's committee. In the secret chamber of the Territorial Committee, the south now proposed its advance step, the creation of the new territory with the repeal of the Missouri compromise. We have no conception to-day what that meant. If some one to-day should propose the repeal of the federal constitution, it would be received with no more surprise and alarm, than was the bold proposal of the south to repeal the compromise. The se-



cret transactions of the committee have not been preserved for us. We can only conclude from desultory statements and the events that soon after transpired, what course the contentions in the committee took. It appears that the southern Democrats insisted that the constitution gave them the right to take their property into the territories. The northern Democrats, especially Douglas, believed slavery to be a local institution, subject to local law, and that a territory had the same power as a state to prohibit it. An agreement was reached whereby both parties consented to let the supreme court decide the extent of congressional control over slavery in the territories, and both sides promised to abide by such decision.

This was the status of affairs when, on January 4, 1854, Douglas brought in his bill for organizing Nebraska Territory. There was no mention made of slavery in the provisions relating to the territory, but a clause was added which provided that: "When admitted as a state the said territory or any portion of the same shall be received into the Union, with or without slavery, as its constitution may prescribe at the time of its admission." This was simple enough, and seemingly in accord with the compromises of 1820 and 1850.

But the bill was accompanied by a report in which Douglas explained his views of the

compromise of 1850. The report is more valuable for our purpose than the bill. The principles of 1850 he affirmed were "that all questions pertaining to slavery in the territories and in the new states to be formed therefrom, are to be left to the decision of the people residing therein, by their appropriate representatives to be chosen by them for that purpose; that all cases involving title to slaves and questions of personal freedom are to be referred to the adjudication of the local tribunals, with the right of appeal to the supreme court of the United States; that the provisions of the constitution of the United States in respect to fugitives from service are to be carried into faithful execution in all the organized territories the same as in the states."

In 1850 he told his constituents in the Chicago speech quoted above, that the compromise of 1850 was based upon the great principle that each territory shall decide for itself the question of slavery. The exposition he now made to the senate was virtually the same. Both amounted, in spirit, to a repeal of the compromise of 1820. But he would not, as yet, admit this to be true. For when, on the 16th of January, Senator Dixon, of Kentucky, proposed an amendment expressly repealing that portion of the act of 1820 which prohibited slavery in the territories, Douglas was greatly discomfited. We will let Dixon's own words relate what took place.

“My amendment seemed to take the senate by surprise, and no one appeared more startled than Judge Douglas himself. He immediately came to my seat and courteously remonstrated against my amendment suggesting that the bill which he had introduced was almost in the words of the territorial acts for the organization of Utah and New Mexico; that they being part of the compromise measures of 1850 he had hoped that I, a known and zealous friend of the wise and patriotic adjustment which had then taken place, would not be inclined to do anything to call that adjustment in question, or weaken it before the country. I replied that it was precisely because I had been and was a firm and zealous friend of the compromise of 1850 that I felt bound to persist in the movement *which I had originated*; that I was well satisfied that the Missouri restriction, if not expressly repealed, would continue to operate in the territory to which it had been applied, thus negotiating the great and salutary principle of *non-intervention, which constituted the most prominent and essential feature of the plan of settlement of 1850*. We talked for some time amicably and then separated. Some days afterwards Judge Douglas came to my lodgings whilst I was confined by physical indisposition, and urged me to get up and take a ride with him in his carriage. I accepted his invitation, and rode out with him. Dur-

ing our short excursion we talked on the subject of my proposed amendment. Judge Douglas, to my high gratification, proposed to me that I should allow him to take charge of the amendment and ingraft it on his territorial bill. I acceded to the proposition at once, whereupon a most interesting interchange occurred between us.

“On this occasion Judge Douglas spoke to me in substance thus: ‘I have become perfectly satisfied that it is my duty as a fair-minded national statesman to coöperate with you as proposed, in securing the repeal of the Missouri compromise restriction. It is due to the south, it is due to the constitution, heretofore palpably infringed; it is due to the character for consistency which I have heretofore labored to maintain. The repeal, if we can effect it, will produce much stir and commotion in the free states of the Union for a season. I shall be assailed by demagogues and fanatics there without stint or moderation. Every opprobrious epithet will be applied to me. I shall probably be hung in effigy in many places. It is more than probable that I shall become permanently odious among those whose friendship and esteem I have heretofore possessed. This proceeding may end my political career, but, acting under the sense of duty which animates me, I am prepared to make the sacrifice, I will do it.’ He spoke in the most earnest and touching

manner and I confess that I was deeply affected. I said to him in reply: 'Sir, I once recognized you as a demagogue, a mere party manager, selfish and intriguing. I now find you a warm-hearted and sterling patriot. Go forward in the pathway of duty as you propose, and though all the world desert you, I never will.' "

Senator Atchison was at this time president *pro tempore* of the senate. Since he made the remarks quoted above on the first Nebraska bill he had evidently become convinced that the compromise could be repealed. In his public speeches he pledged himself not to vote for any territorial bill that did not annul or repeal it. He desired to introduce such a bill, and was anxious to become chairman of the Committee on Territories. He told Douglas that he would resign the presidency of the senate if Douglas would resign chairmanship of the committee. Thus the way would open for Atchison to champion the repeal. Douglas asked for twenty-four hours to consider the matter, and at the expiration of that time told Atchison he was willing to introduce the bill himself.

This he did, on the 23rd day of January. The new bill contained the novel doctrine that the *principles* of the act of 1850 made inoperative the prohibition of slavery north of 36° 30' contained in the Missouri compromise of 1820. Out of the half million

square miles of territory thus virtually opened to slavery Douglas carved two vast territories. The northern he called Nebraska, and the southern Kansas. The spirit of the measure was *non-intervention*, the favorite theme of Douglas's oratory, but the heart of the Kansas-Nebraska bill was the repeal of the Missouri compromise.

From this recital of the facts, it is evident that Douglas himself believed that somehow in a vague and mystic manner the principle of non-intervention was source of the act of 1850. Indeed, he had maintained this in all of his public utterances. He therefore was easily led to the conclusion, by gradual steps, guided by the southern leaders, that non-intervention was inconsistent with prohibition, and that therefore the act of 1850 repealed or was inconsistent with the act of 1820. This sort of superficial logic was the method Douglas used in his debate. It was the only logic of which he was capable. Let the reader never forget that Douglas was unqualifiedly and conscientiously and constantly the champion of non-intervention, and then it will not be necessary to find in his ambition to become President, his sole motive for introducing his Kansas-Nebraska bill.

That Douglas himself foresaw the tragic consequences that his attitude would bring upon the country it is impossible to believe. That his desire to become President im-



pelled him to listen more willingly to the luring words of the southern tempters, to institute this campaign for neutral territory, undoubtedly is true. That is a weakness common to all mankind. But that he willingly plunged the nation into the boiling cauldron of civil strife, that he might take political advantage of the situation, is unthinkable in the light of his subsequent acts of patriotism and bravery.

To do him justice, let us not forget that he had for years been a virile advocate of territorial home rule. To him, this was pure democracy: that each county, each state, each territory be allowed to control its own domestic affairs, and as long as he believed slavery to be a domestic institution, the logic of his position was not untenable. The ultimate form of state rights is local autonomy in domestic affairs. To-day we can see that "Bloody Kansas" was the necessary prelude to the civil war. It is easy for us to discover the truth, that slavery, aggressive, defiant, morose, imperious, would be unbending, uncompromising even unto death; that its very attitude of treasonable defiance made war inevitable. Let us not lay at the door of Douglas's ambition the sins of rapine and murder, of arson and burglary committed on the rolling prairies of Kansas during the deadly struggle for freedom under the guise of state autonomy.

Thus was the slavery question reopened;

the "finality" of Clay's compromise proven a fatuity, and the state rights theory carried to its limit. The epilogue of forty years of slavery debate, became the prologue of war.

The challenge sent forth by Douglas was accepted eagerly by the anti-slavery Whigs. In an address signed by DeWitt, Smith, Wade, Sumner, and Chase, the measure was fiercely attacked. In scathing words the bill was characterized as "a gross violation of a sacred pledge, as a criminal betrayal of precious rights, as a part and parcel of an atrocious plot to exclude from a vast, unoccupied region immigrants from the old world and free laborers from our own states, and convert it into a dreary region of despotism inhabited by masters and slaves." These words aroused all the people. In the north they were received by the Abolitionists as the utterances of God-ordained prophets, and became the nucleus of the first platform of the new Republican party; in the south they were condemned as inflammatory, diabolical and utterly inimical to the American system of self-government; in congress they called forth a nervous and terrific assault from Douglas and his cohorts, and taunting replies from Chase and Wade. It was evident from the outset that the northern Democrats could not coalesce with the northern Whigs, but that the southern Whigs would almost unanimously join the southern Democrats in defense of

this bill. Sectional feeling was earlier developed in the south, and was much stronger than in the north.

Closely following his manifesto Chase presented an amendment striking out of the bill the words alluding to the effect of the compromise of 1850 upon the act of 1820, making the Douglas measure simply a repeal of the slavery clause of 1820, as it applied to the specific territories organized by that bill. This focused the discussion. It was not difficult for Chase to show the absurdity of Douglas's jurisprudence; that an act of congress referring specifically to Utah and New Mexico, passed in 1850, repealed a prior act, passed three decades earlier, and applying specifically to that part of the territory of Louisiana lying north of 36° 30'.

But the cry of popular sovereignty was stronger than the logic of Chase, or the withering denunciations of Wade, who characterized the bill as a subterfuge and conspiracy between an ambitious presidential candidate and slavery. There were many men in the north who earnestly believed that Douglas had found the final solution of the perplexing, perennial problem of slavery. Chase's amendment was lost by a more than two-thirds vote.

Douglas, stung by the taunts of Chase, and nervous over the attacks of Cass, a northern Democrat and able jurist, now changed his bill. For the words, "which

was superseded by the principles of the legislation of 1850, commonly called the compromise measure, and is hereby declared inoperative," he substituted, "which, being inconsistent with the principles of non-intervention by congress with slavery in the states and territories, as recognized by the legislation of 1850, commonly called the compromise measures, is hereby declared inoperative and void, it being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any territory or state, nor exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate the domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the constitution of the United States."

Thus the debate had evolved this formal and final form of popular sovereignty. It was a far step that Douglas had taken in the short weeks intervening the introduction of the first Nebraska bill and this ultimate amendment. The veil was ripped from the face of the first measure and here were the words plainly visible, that the compromise of 1820 was repealed by that of 1850, and that the people of every state and territory were to be left "perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way." The amendment was adopted by a majority of over three-fourths, but before the balloting, three of the committee colleagues of Douglas deserted him. Everett opposed

the bill because he believed popular sovereignty in the territories to be a fatuity, for the constitution imposes upon congress the duty to legislate for the territories. Houston, of Texas, opposed it because he did not wish to re-open the slavery question by demolishing the great compromise. And Bell, of Tennessee, one of the ablest men in the senate, could not subscribe to the miserable logic which maintained that the two compromises were inconsistent with each other. Bell, however, voted for the amendment, believing that Douglas should be allowed the courtesy of perfecting his own bill.

Chase pursued Douglas unrelentingly. The last amendment of Douglas concluded with the words, "subject only to the constitution of the United States." Chase now moved to add, "under which the people of the territory, through their appropriate representatives may, if they see fit, prohibit the existence of slavery therein." This was truly in accord with the doctrine of home rule, but it presented only one side. That it might be complete, Senator Platt moved to include the right to introduce slavery as well as prohibit it. Chase refused to incorporate this in his amendment. Pratt's motion was withdrawn because it was unparliamentary, it being an amendment to an amendment to Douglas's amendment. Chase's one-sided proposition was then promptly voted down.

He, however, at once attacked the bill from another side. Were territories to be allowed home rule only on the question of slavery? This would be, manifestly, not home rule at all. Let all the bars down, if true popular rule is to be the lot of each territory, and obliterate every vestige of congressional control over territories. This was the taunting plea of Chase, as he introduced his amendment to take from congress its veto power over territorial legislation, and mollify the veto power of the territorial governor by allowing the legislature to override his veto by a two-thirds vote. The defeat of this amendment brought forth still another. If "squatters" in Kansas and Nebraska were "sovereigns," why should they not elect their own governors and judges and secretaries, instead of allowing the President of the nation to appoint them? This motion was also lost, amid the jeers of Chase's followers that stirred the temper of the Democrats. Finally Chase moved that only one territory be created out of the domain. He read aright the object of forming two territories. One was to be devoted to slavery, the other to freedom. One was a gift to the south, the other a sop to the north. His motion, of course, met defeat.

The bill was now reported from the committee of the whole and March third set as the day for the final vote. On that day, Bell, of Tennessee, made his final and ablest argu-



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ment against the bill. He combatted the notion that popular sovereignty could be established by act of congress; he demonstrated to the south that no lasting benefits could come to her by its passage; he deplored the immediate and far-reaching sentiment against slavery that would surely follow. His logic created neither enthusiasm nor conviction.

Douglas closed the debate in a characteristic speech. Adroitly he avoided the real issue, and fastened the fallacy upon his auditors, that his committee had to choose between the "principle" of the compromise of 1820, the principle of exclusion, and the "principle" of 1850, the principle of home rule; vigorously he maintained that these two great acts were in essence opposed to one another and that the act of 1850 revoked the act of 1820; valiantly he opposed the contentions of Chase and Sumner and Wade and Seward that the compromise of 1820 was a solemn compact, the repository of a lasting obligation between the north and the south to which the north had been faithful to the letter, and from which the south was now trying to slip away; craftily he played the magician in his legerdemain attempt to show that Missouri did not come into the Union under the act of 1820; sarcastically he hurled vindictive personalities into the face of Chase and Sumner, Wade and Seward; defiantly he dared the north to refuse

the passage of his measure; pompously he boasted that every American territory is wholly capable of self-government, that the grievance of the thirteen colonies was the denial of this right by Great Britain, and that anyone who dared contradict that fact on the senate floor was not loyal to American sentiment; peevishly he denied that his ambition for the presidency had prompted him to the creation of his bill; exultingly he showered forth the pacifying effects of the principle of home rule by removing forever the agitation over slavery; patriotically he pleaded the permanence of the Union, as dependent upon the permanence of the adjustment of the differences between the north and the south, and the lasting elimination of sectional feeling.

It was essentially a southern speech. The north was taunted because it opposed the admission of all territories with slavery; the Abolitionists and Free Soilers were denounced as enemies of tranquillity and compromise. In a running battle with Chase and his colleagues, who continually fired their well aimed questions at him, he shot the grape and canister of sarcasm and ridicule into the fortresses of their arguments and the fastnesses of their convictions. But while he thus swung skilfully the lariat of popular sovereignty, to capture the votes of the south, he quite as masterfully called forth the aid of the northern Democrats by

utterly avoiding any defense of slavery. Here was the master politician playing both sides at once, by tactfully aiding the one and by not offending the other. And all under the guise of patriotism, the starry canopy that has covered such a multitude of fallacies and demagogeries.

"It is apparent," he says, after quoting from the instructions of the various colonies to their delegates in the Continental congress, "that the Declaration of Independence had its origin in the violation of that great fundamental principle which secured to the people of the colonies the right to regulate their own domestic affairs, in their own way; and that the revolution resulted in the triumph of that principle, and the recognition of the rights asserted by it. Abolitionism proposes to destroy the right and extinguish the principle for which our forefathers waged a seven years' bloody war, and upon which our whole system of free government is founded. They not only deny the application of these principles to the territories, but insist upon fastening the prohibition upon all those states to be formed out of these territories."

His was the boast of the westerner when he said: "You cannot fix bounds to the onward march of this great and growing country. You cannot fetter the limbs of the young giant. He will burst all your chains. He will expand and grow and in-

crease and extend civilization, Christianity and liberal principles. Then, sir, if you cannot check the growth of the country in that direction, is it not the part of wisdom to look the days in the face and provide for an event which you cannot avoid? I tell you, sir, you must provide for continuous lines of settlement from the Mississippi Valley to the Pacific Ocean. And in making this provision, you must decide upon what principles the territories shall be organized; in other words, whether the people shall be allowed to regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, according to the provisions of this bill, or whether the opposite doctrine of congressional interference is to prevail. Postpone it, if you will; but whenever you do act, this question must be met and decided." How subtle the insinuation that the patriot could decide it according to the Declaration of Independence!

But we must attribute the profoundest sincerity to Douglas in his peroration: "Affection for the Union can never be alienated or diminished by any other party issues than those which are gained upon sectional or geographical lines. When the people of the north shall all be rallied under one banner, and the whole south marshalled under another banner, and each section excited to frenzy and madness by hostility to the institutions of the other, then the patriot may well tremble for the perpetuity of the Union.

Withdraw the slavery question from the political arena and remove it to the states and territories, each to decide for itself, such a catastrophe can never happen. Then you will never be able to tell, by any senator's vote for or against any measure, from what state or section of the Union he comes.

"Why, then, can we not withdraw this vexed question from politics? Why can we not adopt the principle of this bill as a rule of action in all new territorial organizations? Why can we not deprive these agitators of their vocation and render it impossible for senators to come here upon bargains on the slavery question? I believe that the peace and harmony and the perpetuity of the Union requires us to go back to the doctrine of the Revolution, to the principles of the constitution, the Compromise of 1850, and leave the people, under the constitution, to do as they may see proper in respect to their own internal affairs.

"Mr. President, I have not brought this question forward as a northern man or as a southern man. I am unwilling to recognize such divisions and distinctions. I have brought it forward as an American senator, representing a state which is true to this principle, and which has approved of my action in respect to the Nebraska Bill. I have brought it forward not as an act of justice to the south more than to the north; I have presented it especially as an act of justice to

the people of those territories and of the states to be formed therefrom now and in all time to come. I have nothing to say about northern rights or southern rights. I know of no such divisions or distinctions under the constitution. The bill does equal and exact justice to the whole Union, and every part of it; it violates the right of no state or territory, but places each on a perfect equality and leaves the people thereof to the free enjoyment of all their rights under the constitution.

“Now, sir, I wish to say to our southern friends that if they desire to see this great principle carried out, now is their time to rally around it, to cherish it, preserve it, make it the rule of action of all future time. If they fail to do it now and thereby allow the doctrine of interference to prevail, upon their heads the consequence of that interference must rest. To our northern friends on the other hand I desire to say, that from this day henceforward they must rebuke the slander which has been uttered against the south that they desire to legislate slavery into the territories. \* \* We are willing to stand upon this great principle of self-government everywhere; and it is to us a proud reflection that, in this whole discussion, no friend of the bill has urged an argument in its favor which could not be used in a free state as well as in a slave state and *vice versa*. But no enemy of the bill has



used an argument which would bear repetition one mile across Mason and Dixon's line. Our opponents have dealt entirely in sectional appeal. The friends of the bill have discussed a great principle of universal application, which can be sustained by the same reasons, and the same arguments, in every time and in every corner of the Union."

It was nearly five o'clock on the morning of March 4, 1854, when Douglas concluded these words of sophistry and prophecy. All night long the debate had surged wild and fierce. For seventeen hours, without pause, the Little Giant defied the united powers of the opposition. His energy, his daring, his demagogism, his earnestness prevailed. Thirty-seven votes were cast for his bill, fourteen against it. By the end of May it had passed the house and received the President's signature.

How true it proved that patriots trembled "for the perpetuity of the Union" when the issues were finally "joined upon sectional or geographical lines." How strange that Douglas should fail to see that he was hastening his country to the very consummation of this woeful condition; that slavery was the very issue destined by nature to thus sever the Union. Instead of a harmless local question, to be settled by the people of the various states, it was a virulent national issue, to be settled by all the people

of all the states. Douglas tried to tether a raving bull with a cord of tissue paper.

Such northern sentiment as had arisen in favor of the Nebraska Bill, rapidly receded after its passage. The people of the north believed that somehow they had been cheated, that the south had played them a sharp trick. The great Compromises they held to be more binding than ordinary legislation, because they established a working principle, which should determine the admission of new states that came from the west, seeking entrance to the Union. This plighted troth now was broken. The sacred line of thirty-six degrees, thirty minutes was wiped out. The north believed that it had been willfully and maliciously injured. This belief may have been founded upon fancy quite as much as upon reason, but it prevailed throughout the free states. Nor did the slave states do anything to disabuse the minds of their northern neighbors.

Douglas was to discover the bitterness of this resentment upon his return to Chicago. He found the city in a tumult of abolition excitement, himself the hated object of popular arraignment lampooned and hung in effigy; and his popular sovereignty measure the subject of universal opprobrium. On the day of his homecoming flags were floating at half mast, bells were tolling a doleful dirge, and his portraits were displayed in the shop windows framed in black crepe. But

Douglas was not a man to wince. His bravery outlived mobs and his courage outran fleet-footed malice. He challenged the city. He announced that he would speak in North Market hall the following Saturday night. There he would explain the principles of home rule, and declare the causes for his action. Ten thousand people responded to this announcement. The hall could not contain them, so Douglas spoke from a balcony. It was an infuriated throng that had not come to attend reason but to do violence to fair play. They greeted their senator with jeers and hisses; they answered his sentences with hoots and cat calls. Calmly Douglas faced their fury. He tried every device known to the accomplished debater; story, jest and gibe, sarcasm, ridicule, and exhortation. But all in vain. They would not hear him. He could not conquer the mob, and unfortunately he allowed the mob to capture his temper, and toward midnight he pulled out his watch and shouted: "It is now Sunday morning. I will bid you good-bye. I am going to church and you can go to hell."

The scene of the struggle for nationalism now shifts from Washington to Kansas, from the halls of congress to the rolling plains of the far west. Upon those virgin prairies are to be fought the skirmishes that will become a Lexington and a Concord for a new

era of freedom. There will meet the determined advance guard of slavery, and the resolute pioneers of freedom. The clash of their arms will resound throughout the world, and their sacrifices will make sacred in our history the name of "Bloody Kansas." Let the story of this struggle for Kansas reveal how vain was Douglas's contention that slavery is a mere local institution, and the futility of his remedy for slavery agitation in home rule. For when popular sovereignty became "squatter sovereignty," when theory became reality, then it was proclaimed to all mankind that slavery was a national institution, a universal woe, not to be wiped out by state statutes or municipal ordinances, but only by the united effort of the entire Union, and alas, by the blood of man.

When it was learned that the fate of the new territories depended upon the votes of those who should emigrate thither, both north and south prepared to control the territorial electorate. The south had the advantage of contiguity. Missouri was a slave state. It was also a border state. Its western counties were inhabited by that class of wild, desperate, brutal, lawless, vulgar characters that form the usual frontier between civilization and savagery; men who are refugees from justice, or who have sought the unconventional life of the border to give free play to their passions, or who have been driven to desperate deeds by hard fate, and

have fled to the land where all history is wiped out and men live for the present alone. While these men had no special reason to espouse the cause of slavery they were ready to adventure in its behalf, and the slaveholder of Missouri had only to shape this coarse material to his wishes. The south believed that fair play demanded Nebraska for the north, Kansas for the south, and that any attempt to control the destinies of Kansas showed bad faith on the part of the north. Thus material interests were linked with the convictions of justice in the manipulation of the "border ruffians." In every western county was organized a "Self-defensive Association," and by September, 1854, a horde of over ten thousand brutal, reckless adventurers were prepared to hurl themselves over the border into Kansas, to fight for the perpetuation of slavery.

The north was ready to meet this onslaught. Eli Thayer, a patriotic and able business man of Worcester, Massachusetts, had perfected a plan for the organization of an emigrant aid society. It was his purpose to back this society with an enormous capital, to put it upon a firm business basis, to gain the control of vast tracts of land in the territories, to found churches, to build schools, mills, stores and taverns, and to invite sober and industrious homeseekers to take advantage of these preparations and make Kansas their home. These immigrants he

proposed to organize into companies, to guide them to their destination, and aid them in every possible way to settle down to their chosen pursuits. He endeavored to reduce the hardships of migration and settlement in a new country. His company was not organized until 1855, but in 1854, with the coöperation of several other gentlemen, he sent out a party of thirty immigrants, who founded the city of Lawrence. This little company had been preceded by Dr. Charles Robinson, who was sent by Thayer and his colleagues to reconnoiter. Dr. Robinson became a leading figure in the organizing of the free state. He had been a "forty-niner" in California, had helped organize the vigilance committees, and had been active in preparing California for the Union. This valuable experience he supplemented with courage, adaptability, sound sense and keen judgment.

The south pictured the emigrant aid society as a hideous monster, conceived in the desire to deprive the slave states of their lawful rights. The southern press described its leaders as enemies of the Union, its ranks were filled, they declared, with the outcasts of jails and slums. 'The southern people believed that they were armed with guns and sabres and proposed entering Kansas like an invading army. The national government also looked upon Thayer's scheme with displeasure. The President



maintained that every one should be free to go as he chose; that individual autonomy must precede state autonomy. Organized immigration from the north, then, was considered hostile to the principle of home rule. Thus did prejudice precede the immigrant bands and make their journey doubly difficult. They were misunderstood from the beginning. For there were no abolitionists among their leaders, and scarcely any in their ranks. Thayer, and Robinson, and Lawrence, and their associates were northern Whigs and Freesoilers. They wished to infuse enough freesoil sentiment into Kansas to preserve its broad fields for free labor.

By September, 1854, Dr. Robinson had brought two hundred northern immigrants to Lawrence. The site was claimed by a Missourian, who refused to submit his claim to arbitration. He called a band of rowdies to his assistance, but the firmness of the immigrants compelled the retreat of the first invasion of Missouri.

Gentle Governor Reeder, a Douglas Democrat of mild quality, now issued orders for the election of the first delegate of the territory to congress. This was the occasion for the second invasion of Kansas. Nearly two thousand ruffians crossed the border and cast their illegal votes for J. W. Whitfield, the pro-slavery candidate. This fine burlesque upon home rule was followed in the spring of 1855 by an even more bold and

shameful outrage upon the principle of popular sovereignty. The occasion was the election of the first territorial legislature. A census of the territory showed the population to be about eight thousand five hundred. Perhaps three thousand of these were voters, nearly three-fourths of whom had come from the south. It was self-evident that the pro-slavery element could carry the election. But to make it doubly sure, five thousand border ruffians, organized in companies and regiments, with drums beating and fifes shrieking and banners flying, armed to the teeth as for bloody battle, marched to the polling places and carried the election. This open fraud was countenanced by the government at Washington, but bitterly condemned by the northern states.

Their election thus wrought through brazen effrontery, it is no wonder that the work of these legislators reached the extremes of infamy. The governor had called the legislature to meet at Pawnee. It remained there four days, then it adjourned itself to Shawnee Mission, near the Missouri border, within hailing distance of its creators in Missouri. The governor vetoed the proposition to change the meeting-place, and broke off all official communication with the legislature when it left Pawnee. He contended that it had no authority to do so without his consent. The lawmakers thus left

alone, abandoned themselves to a carnival of vicious legislation. They passed laws punishing with death anyone who should aid a runaway slave, or should entice a slave away from his master, or should bring into Kansas, from any state, a slave against his master's will. To deny, by spoken or written word, the right to hold slaves in the territory, they made punishable by imprisonment for two years, with hard labor.

These excesses drove the free-state men to desperation. Dr. Robinson sent to Thayer for rifles. His followers he counselled to ignore utterly the territorial government, and give obedience alone to the representative of the national government, in the territory. He planned a constitutional convention which should frame a constitution, and form the basis of a free-state government. This convention met in Topeka on the 23rd of October, 1855. Its constitution forbade slavery within the state after July 4, 1857. This instrument was ratified by 1731 votes, while only 46 votes were cast against it. The pro-slavery men did not vote. In January, 1856, the free-state people held their election and chose Dr. Robinson for governor, and a legislature in consonance with their constitution.

There were now two governments, a territorial and a free-state; two governors, one appointed by the President, the other elected by the free-state electorate; two legisla-

tures, one foisted into power by the border ruffians, the other chosen by the free-state faction. Kansas was having her full measure of self-government.

The free-state legislature met in March, 1856. Its principal business was the preparing of a memorial, praying congress for admission under the Topeka constitution, and the election of two United States senators. Governor Robinson advised moderation, and cautioned his followers not to do anything hostile to the general government, "or the territorial government while it shall remain with the sanction of congress."

The tension was now so tightly drawn that it required only a trifling event to snap it. A quarrel over a land claim between a pro-slavery and a free-state man resulted in the murder of the latter. His friends gathered on the spot of the crime, and swore vengeance. Especially threatening was the attitude of Jacob Bronson against one Buckley, whom he called the instigator of the murder. Buckley had a peace warrant sworn out against Bronson. The territorial sheriff, Jones, of Douglas county, arrested Bronson and started for Lecompton with the prisoner. As they were nearing Lawrence, a body of free-state men rescued Bronson. The sheriff retreated to the border, called his Missouri pals to his aid, and reported the unlawful rescue to the territorial governor. The militia, composed mostly of

border ruffians, was summoned to march upon Lawrence and capture the culprits who had rescued Bronson. The people of the threatened town appointed a committee of safety, and sent emissaries to Governor Shannon, to apprise him of the facts. When he learned that the rescue had not taken place in Lawrence, nor by residents of the town, nor at their instigation or connivance, he hastened to Lawrence himself and negotiated a treaty wherein it was stipulated by the townsfolk that they would not resist legal process, would aid in enforcing the laws, and the governor agreed not to call upon any non-residents of Kansas for aid. The Missourians, yielding to the personal entreaties of the governor, dispersed to their homes, and peace seemed assured.

But Sheriff Jones learned that some of the Bronson rescuers had returned to Lawrence. He forthwith attempted to serve summons on S. W. Wood, but a great crowd gathered and made the escape of the refugee possible. The next day the sheriff tried to arrest S. F. Tappan, and received a slap in the face for his effort. The Governor sent a company of United States troops from Fort Leavenworth to aid the sheriff, but when they reached Lawrence, the miscreants had disappeared. The soldiers pitched their tents outside the village. During the night some villainous bigot sneaked into the sheriff's tent and shot him. The

wound was not fatal to the sheriff, but it was deadly to the free-state cause.

The ire of the Missourians was inflamed to white heat; the federal justice Lecanpte charged the grand jury investigating the crime that resistance to federal process is treason, punishable by death; the general government at Washington denounced the crime in flamboyant language; the friends of Free Kansas were humiliated throughout the north. Nor could the disclaimers of the people of Lawrence neutralize the burning acid of these attacks. They sent apologies to the territorial governor; they hunted the criminal, and offered a reward of five hundred dollars for his apprehension. It was of no avail. The grand jury found indictments against the leading citizens of Lawrence, including Dr. Robinson, and the editors of the two local newspapers. These indictments were placed in the hands of the United States marshal, Donalson, for service. All except three of the men gave themselves into the marshal's custody. It was the earnest desire of the villagers to obey the laws. But the marshal was bent upon finding cause for attack. He issued a proclamation calling on all "the law-abiding citizens of the territory to appear at Le-compton as soon as possible, and in numbers sufficient for the proper execution of the law." The border raiders knew what this meant. They came by the hundreds. They



terrorized the neighborhood of Lawrence, and camped on the prairie just outside the village. The frightened people turned in vain to their governor, imploring that he use the United States troops to protect their property. When he was finally told that they would be compelled to defend their rights with the force of arms, and that this meant war, he replied: "War then it is, by God!"

And war it was. The horde swooped into Lawrence, the printing presses were demolished, the hotel burned to the ground, the churches pillaged, and even homes given to the flames. Territorial sovereignty became the sovereignty of the fire-brand.

On the night of May 24th John Brown avenged the sacking of Lawrence. With a half dozen members of his family and one or two others, he went to the settlement of Dutch Henry's crossing on Pottawattomie creek. There he dragged five innocent men from their beds and hacked them into pieces with cutlasses. Henceforth he was known as "Pottawattomie Brown," and his name has been woven into song and story. To those who calmly read the brutal record of his fiendish frenzy he must appear as an arch-criminal, for to robbery he added arson, to arson murder, and to murder treason. And all under the cloak of freedom! Thus the lawlessness of the border ruffian found its peer in the lawlessness of the insane bigot.

For every Sheriff Jones there was a John Brown, and for every sacking of Lawrence there was a Pottawattomie massacre.

The struggle between the pro-slavery and free-state men became a free-for-all guerilla warfare. Battles were fought at Black Jack and Bull Creek. Ossawattomie was burned, isolated farms pillaged. Missourians rushed in from the east to save the state for slavery. Iowans rushed in from the north to maintain the cause of free labor. Upon the fields of Kansas these determined forces met until the shock of battle at last aroused the national government, and federal soldiers under a new and able governor, J. M. Geary, put an end to this bloody fiasco of home rule. The military strife was succeeded by a civil struggle before Kansas could be admitted to the union.

President Buchanan, soon after his inauguration, sent Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, as governor, and F. P. Stanton, of Tennessee, as secretary to the territory. These were wise and honest men, whose careful guidance helped the conservative free-state men, and the law-abiding pro-slavery element over the threshold of statehood. The pro-slavery men called a convention to convene at Lecompton to frame a constitution. This instrument contained an article guaranteeing the right of property in slaves already within the territory. Another clause provided for slavery as a permanent institu-

tion in the state. The plan of the convention was to submit this latter provision to the people. They were not to have an opportunity to vote *in toto* in the constitution; hence they must have slavery, either as a permanent institution or as a continuation of an existing institution.

Meanwhile the governor had guaranteed the free-state men a fair and honest election. They had taken a careful census of the territory, and found their side in a large majority. An honest election meant the capture of the territorial legislature, and, on October 5, 1857, this was accomplished, though the governor had to throw out the votes in several eastern counties because the Missouri-ans had cast ten times as many votes as there were inhabitants.

The free-state men convened this new territorial legislature and resolved to submit the whole of the Lecompton constitution to the people on the fourth day of the following January. But the pro-slavery men had fixed December 21 as their election day, and accordingly on that day 6266 votes were cast for the constitution with slavery a permanent institution, and about 600 for the constitution without slavery permanently fixed upon the commonwealth. Nearly one-half of the votes were fraudulent, and the free-state men refused to vote at all.

Two elections were fixed for January 4, 1858. One was ordered by the territorial

government, upon the whole of the Lecompton constitution, and the other fixed by the Lecompton constitution itself for the election of state officers. The free-state men carried both of these elections. They cast over ten thousand votes against the Lecompton constitution, and elected a full quota of officers under the very constitution they rejected.

The Lecompton constitution was, however, sent to Washington in spite of this overwhelming rejection. While congress was struggling with the measure, the free-state people, fearing lest the national government might foist this unwelcome constitution upon them, called a third constitutional convention, and framed a third constitution, and the people adopted it by three thousand votes.

There were now, in poor Kansas, three legislatures, the territorial, the Topeka, and the Lecompton; three constitutions, the Topeka, the Lecompton, and the constitution of 1858. The free-state people controlled all the legislatures, and had adopted the first and the last constitution. An unquestioned majority of the people of the territory had rejected the Lecompton constitution. But congress was not satisfied. Another vote upon the Lecompton constitution was ordered, and for the second time it was rejected by eleven thousand votes, out of thirteen thousand.

Here ended the struggle for Kansas. It brought retribution upon the south for the

repeal of the compromise; shame upon the north for sanctioning the deeds of radical fanatics like John Brown, and disappointment to all, in its bitter object lessons of the failure of home rule. And to the world it revealed the determination of slavery and the unrelenting ardor of free labor.

In two short years the experience of Kansas became the bitter experience of the nation. And who foresaw the prophecy in this unique, tragic struggle? Not the President. The shedding of blood had indeed aroused him to issue a proclamation characterizing the efforts of the free-state men as "an attempted insurrection," and calling upon all law-abiding citizens of other states and territories to keep their hands off from Kansas, and commanding all residents of Kansas to obey the law. He had seen only one side of the struggle. Not congress, for it dallied with the Topeka constitution and sent the Lecompton document back for a third election. The senate had witnessed the brutal attack of Brooks upon Sumner. The house had merely voted a mild censure upon its recreant member, Brooks. Not the Supreme Court. In the Dred Scott case it floundered around in the uncertainties of the constitutional aspects of slavery extension. It seemed to adjudicate a multitude of things, but decided only that a negro, descended from a slave mother, was not a citizen of the United States, nor

indeed could be. Nor did Stephen A. Douglas read the prophecy that the fulfilment of his policy of popular sovereignty had written in flaming letters across the limitless prairies of Kansas.

But Douglas remained true to his theory. While the southern Democrats repudiated it, and claimed that the Dred Scott decision had decided that neither congress nor the territorial legislatures had the right or the power to exclude slavery from the territories. Not only this, but they further insisted that they had the right to take slaves into the territories, and demanded the protection of the federal government for their slave property in the territories.

Thus, while Douglas was developing a theory on the "dividing line between federal and local authority," and the people of Kansas were working out, in blood and anguish, their own salvation under this theory, the southern democrats were pushing this dividing line farther and farther away from the national capitol, until it became a vanishing point in the dim horizon. Here then Douglas Democrats and southern Democrats came to the parting of the ways. How portentous for the nation was this parting none of them foresaw.

We must now recur to Douglas's political fortunes. Douglas was very ambitious to become President. This ambition fastened



itself upon him in its virulent form. He resorted to the usual methods employed by politicians to bring themselves into prominence. He posed and planned and journeyed; he displayed his talents; he spoke to vast throngs; he made friends with influential journals and leading men; he was always lavish with good-fellowship and sympathy. But Douglas did not compromise his convictions. He did not straddle the Great Issue. It was his uncompromising attitude on the question of home rule that estranged him from the south, and lost him the most cherished hope of his heart.

We have seen that Douglas was the adored chieftain of young men, and that their hot eagerness for his promotion proved fatal to Douglas in 1852. The year 1856 should have been the Douglas year. The "Little Giant" was then in the full stature of his greatness. His popular-sovereignty policy was at the climax of its popularity. The southern Democrats were not yet ready for an open breach, and Douglas's friends had made great efforts to organize his following, and send favorable delegations to the convention, held that year in Cincinnati. But it was not to be.

There were four candidates before the convention. Oldest in years and experience was Lewis Cass, grim old war horse of Democracy, talented, patriotic, uncompromising, independent. He had been the

party's candidate in 1848; had sought the nomination again in 1852, and now, for the last time, he entered the race. Next in the list stood Franklin Pierce, the President. He was a mild-mannered New Hampshire gentleman, a lawyer of ability, a soldier with a good record, an orator of pleasing grace; a conservative, well-meaning man, with no conspicuous ability for executive work. Third came James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania; a courtly gentleman of the old school, a lawyer of some note, and a statesman whose services had extended over three decades in congress and in the diplomatic corps. These years of public service had not served to reveal any especial talent for statecraft. His was that conservative, non-aggressive, uniform mediocrity which manipulating politicians love to find in the man they put up for office. Such a man possesses political utility. And finally Judge Douglas completed the list of rivals. Of the four, he stood conspicuously first in ability, and in general popularity.

You will at once see that the convention of 1856 was almost a replica of the convention of 1852. The same candidates were presented, backed by the same influences. Franklin Pierce's name was withdrawn after the fourteenth ballot, and his support went largely to Douglas. There were two hundred and ninety-six votes in the convention. On the first ballot Buchanan led with 135½

votes; Pierce had 122½; Douglas 33, and Cass 6. After the withdrawal of Pierce the ballot stood: Buchanan 168, Douglas 122, Cass 5. When the sixty-sixth ballot was announced, Col. Richardson, of Illinois, Douglas's manager, read the following telegram from his chief:

"Mr. Buchanan having received a majority of the convention is, in my opinion, entitled to the nomination. I hope my friends will give effect to the voice of the majority of the party."

The wish was obeyed, and Buchanan received the nomination.

There is every reason to believe that Douglas acted purely in the interests of party harmony. In a letter to Richardson, received before the balloting began, Douglas said: "From the telegraphic reports in the newspapers I fear that an embittered state of feeling is being engendered in the convention, which may endanger the harmony and success of our party. I wish you and all my friends to bear in mind that I have a thousandfold more anxiety for the triumph of our principles than for my own personal elevation. If the withdrawal of my name will contribute to the harmony of our party, or the success of our cause, I hope you will not hesitate to take the step. Especially is it my desire that the action of the convention will embody and express the wishes, feelings and princi-

ples of the Democracy of the republic; and hence if Mr. Pierce, or Mr. Buchanan, or any other statesman, who is faithful to the great issues involved in the contest, shall receive a majority of the convention, I earnestly hope that all my friends will unite in insuring him two-thirds, and then in making his nomination unanimous. Let no personal considerations disturb the harmony or endanger the triumph of our principles."

This is magnanimous. While it is naturally partisan, it does not savor of the rancor or bitterness of a small man who fears defeat. There is no evidence that any other motive than the desire of the triumph of his principles prompted Douglas to write this letter. His subsequent actions testify to his sincerity. He entered heartily into the canvass. But the two men could not remain friends. Buchanan tried to domineer, and no man was ever able to drive Douglas. After the election Douglas called on the President to protest against the forcing of the Lecompton constitution upon Kansas. Buchanan insisted in writing into his message a recommendation of its adoption. Senator Douglas said: "If you do, I will denounce it, as soon as it is read." To this the President hotly retorted: "Remember that no Democrat ever yet differed from an administration of his own choice without being crushed. Beware of the fate of Tallmage and of Rives." "Mr. President,"

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came the unhesitating response, "I wish you to remember that General Jackson is dead!"

A careful observer might have discerned a forecast of this division in the Cincinnati convention. While the platform was a Douglas document, affirming "popular sovereignty" to be the basis of true democracy, the convention was manipulated by southern men whose enthusiasm for Douglas's theory of home rule had been greatly cooled by the practical outcome of the Kansas strife, and who were prepared to read the most radical pro-slavery principles into the Dred Scott decision. Slidell, a crafty southern radical, was the principal promoter of Buchanan's interest on the floor of the convention. It was the almost solid vote of the south that gave Buchanan the lead in the convention; and to his election only four northern states, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, and California, contributed their votes.

The first national Republican convention met in Philadelphia in 1856, and nominated General John C. Fremont for President and William L. Dayton for Vice President. 1,300,000 votes were cast for these candidates, all from the north. Party lines were rapidly merging into sectional lines.

If the southern leaders distrusted Douglas, they had every reason to feel gratified at the response their confidence in Buchanan

called forth. If they feared the independence of the doughty champion of "squatter sovereignty," they could implicitly rely upon the ductility of their President. They led him at will. It was apparently their design to force slavery upon Kansas by admitting the state under the Lecompton constitution.

We have seen that the free-state people refused to vote upon the sending of delegates to the Lecompton convention, and that they took no part in the election on the twenty-first of the preceding December, because only one article of the document was to be voted upon. But President Buchanan, in his message to congress, boldly assumed that the one-sided vote upon only one clause in the constitution was an acceptance of the whole by the entire electorate. And he furthermore advanced the surprising doctrine that it had "been solemnly adjudged by the highest tribunal known to our laws, that slavery exists in Kansas by virtue of the constitution of the United States. Kansas, therefore, at this moment is as much a slave state as Georgia or South Carolina." This became the orthodox southern interpretation of the Dred Scott decision.

To this wild length Douglas could not go. When a majority of his committee on territories brought in a report recommending the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton constitution, he prepared a minority



report that showed forth most vigorously and clearly that that constitution was not the act of the people of Kansas. He proved that of the thirty-eight counties only nineteen had been represented in the convention; that not even the widest stretch of the imagination could interpret the submission of only one clause of the constitution, as the submission of the whole; that the election of December 21, 1857, at which only pro-slavery men voted, and which ratified the work of the convention, was illegal, having no sanction in any statute, and that the election of January 4, 1858, in which the free-state men participated and overwhelmingly rejected the constitution, was lawful and valid. Douglas did not deal softly with the pro-slavery men in this report. He accused them of conspiring to thwart the will of the people, and to make Kansas a slave state no matter what the cost.

This frank and manly statement of the facts, made by the leading northern Democrat, the father of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and the champion of popular sovereignty, greatly angered the administration. The break between Douglas and the President was complete. All the power of the administration was turned against him. The debate on the committee measure was fierce and acrimonious, as only a factional debate can become. Douglas was taunted as an Abolitionist, a Black Republican, a traitor

to his party. He never displayed his brilliant talents to better advantage than in this bitter struggle for the mastery of Kansas. Devotion to the principle of popular sovereignty inspired him to magnificent effort. He religiously believed that the perpetuity of the Union depended upon this principle. This conviction invested all of his words with a seriousness, and his acts with a solemnity, that was most impressive. It also endowed him with an independence that one vainly seeks in a mere politician.

In March, Crittenden, of Kentucky, moved a substitute for the administration bill, providing that the Lecompton constitution be at once submitted to the people, and, if approved, the state be admitted on the proclamation of the President. If rejected, a convention was to be convened for the purpose of framing a new constitution, to be submitted to the people. Unusual precautions were provided in the bill against fraudulent voting, the vice of Kansas at that time. This bill was defeated by a vote of 24 to 34.

The debate on the general question grew daily in violence and bitterness. The vote was fixed for March 23rd. On the evening of the 22nd Douglas made his final argument. It was one of his best speeches. A brilliant auditory had assembled to hear him, a crowd that overflowed aisles and galleries; that responded to the seriousness of the occasion, fully realizing the gravity of the sit-

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uation. Douglas began by reviewing his career in congress, proving the absolute consistency of his course in adhering unfalteringly to the great ideal of local autonomy and the equality of the states. He then reiterated what he had so often stated in the Kansas-Nebraska debate, that the compromise of 1850 had virtually repealed that of 1820; that the last measure, of 1850, provided a rule of action applicable everywhere north or south of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , to all territories we then possessed, or ever should acquire. This great compromise, he maintained, was a final settlement of the vexed question of slavery, only on the condition that every territory be allowed to say for itself, whether or not, it desired slavery. To the compromise must be added popular sovereignty, to make the solution final. This rule was to be fairly applied to Kansas. The people were to decide. But the Lecompton constitution was not the expressed will of the people. It was illegally conceived and foisted upon the state by a plotting minority. As he neared the conclusion of his speech he flung defiance into the face of the President, who was attempting in every possible manner to prevent Douglas's reëlection to the senate, using the federal patronage of Illinois as a lever to pry Douglas out of office. In the choice between popular favor or adherence to principle, Douglas never hesitated a moment. Clear as a clarion call his

voice resounded through the senate chamber, and reëchoed throughout the land. "I do not recognize the right of the President to tell me my duty in the senate chamber. When the time comes that a senator is to account to the executive and not to his state, what becomes of the sovereignty of the states? Is it intended to brand every Democrat as a traitor who is opposed to the Lecompton constitution? Come what may, I intend to vote, speak and act according to my own sense of duty. I have no vindication to make of my course. Let it speak for itself. Neither the frowns of favor nor the influence of patronage will change my action or drive me from my principles. I stand immovably upon the principles of state sovereignty, upon which the campaign was fought and the election won. I will stand by the constitution of the United States with all its compromises, and perform all my obligations under it. If I shall be driven into private life, it is a fate that has no terrors for me. I prefer private life, preserving my own self-respect, to abject and servile submission to executive will. If the alternative be private life, or servile obedience to executive will, I am prepared to retire. Official position has no charms for me, when deprived of freedom of thought and action."

The senate stood by the President. It passed the Lecompton bill by a vote of 33 to

25. The house stood by the valiant Douglas and rejected the measure.

Montgomery, of Pennsylvania, introduced a bill that was the homologue of the Crittenden bill, and this passed the house by a vote of 120 to 112. The senate refused concurrence. The conference committee of both houses compromised upon a plan called the English bill. The plan was to let the people of Kansas vote upon the acceptance or rejection of a grant of public lands. If the people rejected the grant, the vote was to be interpreted as a rejection of the Lecompton constitution. If they accepted it, the constitution was to be deemed adopted. If the constitution should be rejected then Kansas should remain a territory until it had sufficient population to entitle her to one representative in congress.

Douglas refused to give his support to this cowardly dodge. In the course of his discussion he said: "Sir, I had hoped that when we came finally to adjust this question, we should have been able to employ language so clear, so unequivocal, that there would have been no room for doubt as to what is meant, and what the line of policy was to be in the future. Are these people left free to take or reject the Lecompton constitution? If they accept the land grant, they are compelled to take it. If they reject the land grant, they are out of the union."

He cracked the lash of logic over the heads of his colleagues, for holding out a bounty "to influence these people to vote for this Lecompton constitution," and for the attempted coercion in compelling Kansas to accept the constitution or remain out of the union until she had attained a population sufficient to entitle her to a congressman according to the existing ratio.

The bill passed both houses, and, as we have seen, Kansas overwhelmingly rejected the Lecompton constitution and its attendant bribe of public lands.

The defeat of the Lecompton bill was looked upon as a triumph for Douglas, a triumph that cost him the friendship of the southern Democrats. As long as they held Buchanan in the hollow of their hand, they could exert a powerful influence against Douglas in the north. It was to regain the undisputed sway over the northern Democrats, as well as to place himself in a position to command the presidential nomination in 1860, that Douglas left the scenes of his bitter contest in Washington to engage in the canvass for his reelection to the senate. When he reached his home the most significant and earnest struggle of his life awaited him.

Chicago welcomed him home as a capital receives its prince. A parade of thirty thousand men escorted him through the principal



streets to the Tremont house, where he spoke from a balcony to the assembled thousands. This, the opening speech of the campaign, was at once the exordium and the outline of the one hundred and thirty speeches that he made during the one hundred days of the canvass. The text of his speech had been spoken for him some three weeks before, when, on June 15th, Abraham Lincoln had accepted the Republican nomination for senator.

Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were old time rivals. They had been admitted to the bar together, they had competed for political favor in the same communities, they had practiced law in the same courts on the same circuits, they had been rivals for the hand of the same maiden, and had been opponents in every political struggle since the days of Jackson. ~~Douglas had become famous, Lincoln had remained obscure;~~ Douglas was the leader of a great national party, Lincoln was the local organizer of a new and untried party; Douglas was the proud creator of the policy of popular sovereignty, not caring "whether the people voted slavery up or voted it down," Lincoln was the humble commentator on the text of the great declaration that "all men are created free and equal."

Now these rivals met in a contest that was destined to become one of the great and glorious events in our national history. It was

not a rivalry of persons but of principles. Compromise and conviction met upon the same platform and struggled for the mastery. All semblance of a local contest immediately vanished, and the eyes of the nation were upon the rivals; their every word was caught up by eager ears, and every paper detailed their speech and action. Illinois became the political and moral battleground of all the land.

The rivals were opposites, not alone in political convictions, but in methods, in physiognomy, in mental traits and in moral conceptions. Providence destined each to be the perfect embodiment of a principle, and nature had prepared each man for his ideal. Douglas, undersized, well knit and erect, his handsome head well poised, graceful of gesture and lordly of mein; Lincoln, tall, gaunt, loosely put together, awkward, called himself "the homeliest man in Illinois." Douglas magnetic beyond resistance, prepossessing, good-natured, impulsive; Lincoln humble, straight-forward, retiring, uncomplaining. Douglas a master of sophistry and fallacy, resorting to tricks and illusions, doing everything to win; Lincoln utterly incapable of deception, and so permeated with the truth that he feared misrepresentation more than defeat. Douglas in speech utterly destitute of wit, or of figure, he never quoted, neither did he hesitate, but his volubility was as unfailing

as the rushing waters of a mountain torrent. His mastery over the audience was due to this irresistible onrush of words, and to his power to hide the real issue, to magnify small points into the ludicrous, to create whole platoons of straw men out of mere phrases from his opponents' speech, and then proceed to demolish them, with stupendous gusto, to the huge delight of his hearers. Douglas was superficial. He never fathomed the meaning of the Dred Scott decision; he was artificial, he never thought through the history of our country. What a contrast to Lincoln, who was nothing if not genuine, who was so profound, that his speeches will remain a perennial well-spring of civic and moral wisdom! And in speech, what a contrast! Lincoln was slow; his words were all carefully measured before they were joined to his sentences, and his precepts were scrupulously weighed before they were spoken. He possessed the humor of Aesop, the wisdom of Franklin, the imagery of Burns, the diction of Emerson, the learning of Bacon, the morality of Paul. Douglas, voluble, deceptive, onrushing; Lincoln logical, truthful, deliberative. These rivals, these opposites in temperament and in method and in purpose, met in the arena of debate and crystallized the political sentiment of the Union.

I have said that Lincoln furnished Douglas with the text, in his speech accepting the

nomination. This was perhaps the most carefully prepared speech Lincoln ever made. He had taken many weeks to prepare it, writing every sentence on loose scraps of paper. These he put together with great care.

The opening paragraph of the speech is now as familiar to all readers as the opening sentences of the Declaration of Independence, or the preamble of the constitution. It contained a prophecy that startled the north; a prophecy that Lincoln himself should be the means of fulfilling. He said: "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object and confident purpose of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the

course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all states, old as well as new, north as well as south."

*#* This remarkable exordium he followed with a careful, logical analysis of the political conditions that prompted the repeal of the Missouri compromise, the Kansas conflict, and the Dred Scott decision. "Put this and that together," he proceeds, "and we have another nice little niche, which we may ere long see filled with another supreme court decision, declaring that the constitution of the United States does not permit a state to exclude slavery from its limits. \* \* \* Such a decision is all that slavery now lacks of being alike lawful in all the states. \* \* \* We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their state free; and we shall awake to the reality instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave state."

The people of the north were awaiting this speech. They knew not who would utter it, or when it would be given voice. They only knew that the inexorable goad of the slave-master was driving northern sentiment into the conviction that this government could not "endure permanently half-slave and half-free." It was decreed by Providence that humble, honest, gifted Abraham Lincoln should utter these words under con-

ditions that gave him a universal hearing, and with such care, such logic, and simplicity, that at once they became the creed of the northern conscience.

This was the first speech of the Lincoln-Douglas campaign of 1858. It was this speech that Douglas essayed to answer from the balcony of the Tremont House on the night of his princely reception. Lincoln sat behind him while he delivered his reply. It was a perfectly characteristic speech, and must be read through in order to understand the clever, catch-penny style, the flippant bombast and the brilliant manœuvre of the skilful Douglas. Only the barest sketch can be given here.

The Senator began by setting himself right in the Lecompton controversy. He aroused wild enthusiasm when he said that he opposed Buchanan, not because the Lecompton constitution was a pro-slavery document, but because it was not submitted to the people. "I denied the right of congress to force it upon them, either as a free state or a slave state. I deny the right of congress to force a slave-holding state upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a free state upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a good thing upon a people who are unwilling to receive it. The great principle is the right of every community to judge and decide for itself whether a thing is right or wrong, whether



it will be good or evil for them to adopt it, and the right of free action, the right of free thought, the right of free judgment upon the question is dearer to every true American than any other under a free government. \* \* \* Whenever you put a limitation upon the right of any people to decide what laws they want, you have destroyed the fundamental principle of self-government." "Popular sovereignty" appealed to his auditors. It was the ample shield that covered the weak points in his armor.

Turning to Lincoln's speech of acceptance, he read the opening paragraph quoted above, and proceeded at once to divert the public mind from Lincoln's fundamental assumption that slavery is a moral wrong. He did this very skilfully, paraphrasing the noble sentiment of the "house divided against itself," and magnifying a bare implication into a major premise. After reading Lincoln's words he proceeded: "In other words, Mr. Lincoln asserts as a fundamental principle of this government that there must be uniformity in the local laws and domestic institutions of each and all the states in the Union; and he therefore invites all the non-slave-holding states to band together, organize as one body, and make war upon slavery in Kentucky, upon slavery in Virginia, upon slavery in the Carolinas, upon slavery in all the slaveholding states in this Union and to persevere in that war until it shall be exter-

minated. \* \* In other words, Mr. Lincoln advocates boldly and clearly a war of sections, a war of the north against the south, of the free states against the slave states." What could be more deft than this flank movement, putting on Lincoln the suspicion of treason?

In answer to Lincoln's analysis of the Dred Scott decision he resorts to similar demagogery. "I have no warfare to make on the Supreme Court," he shouted, "either on account of that or any other decision which they have pronounced from that bench. \* \* \* What security have you for your property, and for your personal rights, if the courts are not upheld, and their decisions respected when once firmly rendered by the highest tribunal known to the constitution? \* \* I am opposed to this doctrine of Mr. Lincoln, by which he proposes to take an appeal from the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States upon these high constitutional questions, to a Republican caucus. \* \* \* I am a law-abiding man. I will sustain the constitution of my country as our fathers have made it. I will yield obedience to the laws, whether I like them or not, as I find them on the statute books."

Lincoln's reason for criticising the Dred Scott decision he likewise distorts into a misshapen thing. "He objects to it \* \* because it deprives the negro of the privil-

eges, immunities and rights of citizenship, which pertain, according to that decision, only to the white man." And this the practiced debater answers: "I am free to say to you that in my opinion this government of ours is founded on a white basis. It was made by the white men, for the benefit of the white man, to be administered by white men in such manner as they should determine. \* \* \* I would give him [the negro] every right and privilege which his capacity would enable him to enjoy, but \* \* \* each state must decide for itself the nature and extent of their rights."

And he thus summarizes the issue: "Thus you see, my fellow-citizens, that the issues between Mr. Lincoln and myself \* \* \* are direct, unequivocal, and irreconcilable. He goes for uniformity in our domestic institutions, for a war of sections, until one or the other shall be subdued. I go for the great principle of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the right of the people to decide for themselves."

It is questionable whether Douglas meant to so abort the logic of Lincoln and misrepresent his conclusions, for it is probable that he did not himself understand the deep meaning of Lincoln's philosophy, and it is quite certain he failed to comprehend the real significance of the Dred Scott decision as it bore on his pet principle of home rule. And it is doubly certain that he utterly

failed to grasp the great underlying truth of Lincoln's structure, that slavery is a wrong. However, Douglas had a wonderful instinct to see the popular side of an issue, and he never hesitated to espouse it, and to clothe it in catchy phrase. He had the crowd, the volatile crowd, with him. They could understand that a war of sections was rebellion, that a "nigger" was not their equal, that the Supreme Court should be revered, that popular sovereignty was fair play. Of Lincoln's high moral attitude, Douglas took no notice. He rather deigned to be above the "Railsplitter" anyway, and silently ignored all allusions to "higher law" and the "rights of man." His catchy phrases acted upon the unthinking multitude like matches on a dry prairie. The flames leaped from village to village, and threatened the Republicans with destruction.

For Lincoln appeared at great disadvantage. He was speaking to convince, not to amuse; he sought to make men think, not to make them cheer; to make them use their heads, not their hands. The philosophy of right and wrong must finally sink into the heart of the common people he loved, but it was a slow process. Meanwhile Douglas was playing skilfully on the surface, arousing the emotions and calling forth universal applause.

Lincoln and his friends realized that something must be done to counteract this ad-

vantage. If these rivals could appear in joint discussion, Douglas would have to meet Lincoln upon an equality. His silent contempt and assumed superiority would be neutralized and his language tempered by the presence of Lincoln. Douglas agreed to the debate. Seven meetings were arranged for, in as many towns, each speaker alternately to open and close, the opening speech to occupy an hour, the reply one hour and a half, the rejoinder one-half hour. Douglas chose to open four debates, leaving Lincoln only three, but he submitted to this inequality with his usual good nature.

Seven Illinois towns were made historic by these meetings. Not one external circumstance that could add significance to these occasions was wanting. For thirty miles around, the country emptied itself into each town. The multitudes came on foot, in wagons, by the train load. They camped in the open fields to await the great day. They marched, they sang, they drank and made merry. Bands, torches, fireworks and banners made bizarre these encounters of the giants. The multitudes came in glee, they departed in silence; they gathered in jubilant excitement, they returned to their homes in sober thought; for Lincoln lived up to his simple purpose, "I want to convince the people." Douglas captivated the people, Lincoln sobered them. Douglas persisted in amplifying the ostensible assump-

tions of Lincoln; the answer was invariably the simple, convincing logic. Douglas's speeches were turgid with misleading insinuations; Lincoln's answers were pregnant with prophecy.

Douglas made great show of Lincoln's quotation from the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created free and equal." In his Bloomington speech (not in the series with Lincoln) he said: "He [Lincoln] believes that the negro, by the divine law, is created the equal of the white man, and that no human law can deprive him of that equality thus secured; and he contends that the negro ought therefore to have all the rights and privileges of citizenship on an equality of the white man. In order to accomplish this, the first thing that would have to be done in this state would be to blot out of our state constitution that clause which prohibits negroes from coming into this state and making it an African colony, and permit them to come and spread over these prairies until in mid-day they shall look as black as night. When our friend Lincoln gets all his colored brethren around him here, he will then raise them to perfection as fast as possible, and place them on an equality with the white man. \* \* He wants them to vote. I am opposed to it. If they had a vote, I reckon they would all vote for him in preference to me. \* \* If the divine law



declares that the white man is the equal of the negro woman, that they are on a perfect equality, I suppose he admits the right of the negro woman to marry the white man." This demagogery was very popular.

Lincoln's reply was simple. He reminded Douglas that it was not necessary for a man to have a negro woman for his wife if he did not want her for his slave. He said: "There is a physical difference between the two races which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality; and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that notwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence,—the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects, certainly not in color, perhaps not in morals or intellectual endowments; but in the right to eat the bread without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man."

Equally popular was Douglas's strategy on

the nationalization of slavery. He affected indifference to such an expansion, believing as he had reiterated for twenty years that slavery was a purely local domestic institution. "I do not care whether slavery is voted up or voted down," he cried. "Let Kentucky mind her own business and take care of her negroes, and we will attend to our own affairs and take care of our negroes, and we will be the best of friends. I recognize all the people of the states, north, and south, east and west, old and new, Atlantic and Pacific, as our brethren, flesh of our flesh, and I will do no act unto them that I would not be willing they should do unto us. I would apply the same Christian rule to the states of this Union that we are taught to apply to individuals, do unto others as you would have others do unto you, and this would secure peace."

Lincoln's rejoinder was no subterfuge. He showed that the slave interests were not satisfied with a mere let-alone policy. They were determined to have slavery declared legal everywhere. "It is merely for the Supreme Court to decide that no state under the constitution can exclude it, just as they have already decided that under the constitution neither congress nor the territorial legislatures can do it. When that is decided and acquiesced in, the whole thing is done. This being true, and this being the way I think slavery is to be made national, let us

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consider what Judge Douglas is doing every day to that end. \* \* \* Democratic policy in regard to that institution will not tolerate the merest breath, the slightest hint of the least degree of wrong about it. Try it by some of Judge Douglas's arguments. He says he don't care whether it is voted up or voted down in the territories. I do not care myself, in dealing with that expression, whether it is intended to be expressive of his individual sentiments on that subject, or only the national policy he desires to have established. It is alike valuable for my purpose. Any man can say that who does not see anything wrong in slavery, but no man can logically say it who does see a wrong in it, because no man can logically say he don't care whether a wrong is voted up or down. He may say he don't care whether an indifferent thing is voted up or down, but he must logically have a choice between a right thing and a wrong thing. He contends that whatever community wants slaves has a right to have them. So they have if it is not a wrong. But if it is a wrong he cannot say people have a right to do wrong. He says that upon the score of equality, slaves should be allowed to go into a new territory like other property. This is strictly logical if there is no difference between it and other property. If it and other property are equal, his argument is entirely logical. But if you insist that one is wrong

and the other right, there is no use to insinuate a comparison between right and wrong. You may turn over everything in the Democratic policy from beginning to end, whether in the shape it takes in the statute books, in the shape it takes in the Dred Scott decision, in the shape it takes in conversation, in the shape it takes in short, maxim-like arguments,—it everywhere carefully excludes the idea that there is anything wrong in it. That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles, right and wrong, throughout the world. These are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, the other is the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, 'You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation, and live from the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race. It is the same tyrannical principle."

Douglas knew better than to answer this phase of the argument.

The differences between the rivals and

their convictions is fairly shown by the following extracts. The first is from Douglas's Bloomington speech: "This Union can only be preserved by maintaining the fraternal feeling between the north and the south, the east and the west. If that good feeling can be preserved the Union will be as perpetual as the fame of its founders. It can be maintained by preserving the sovereignty of states, the right of each state and of each territory to settle its domestic concerns for itself, and the duty of each to refrain from interfering with the other, in any of its local or domestic institutions. Let that be done, and this republic, which began with thirteen states and which now numbers thirty-two, which when it began only extended from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, but now reaches to the Pacific, may yet expand north and south until it covers the whole continent and becomes one vast ocean-bound confederacy. Bear in mind the dividing line between state rights and federal authority; let us maintain the great principles of popular sovereignty of state rights and the Federal Union as the constitution has made it, and this Republic will endure forever."

Lincoln was more concerned about the dividing line between right and wrong, and about the preservation of the underlying principles of the Republic as laid down in the Declaration of Independence. He said,

at Lewiston, in a speech not in the series with Douglas, in which he had shown, by careful historical analysis that the framers of the constitution did not write slavery into the laws of the land, but that they believed they had put slavery well on the way to extinction: "Now, if slavery had been a good thing would the fathers of the Republic have taken a step calculated to diminish its beneficent influences among themselves and snatch the boon wholly from their posterity? These communities, by their representatives in old Independence Hall, said to the whole world of men: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' This was their majestic interpretation of the economy of the universe. This was their lofty and wise and noble understanding of the justice of the Creator to his creatures. Yes, gentlemen, to all his creatures, to the whole great family of man. In their enlightened belief, nothing stamped with the divine image and likeness was sent into the world to be trodden on and degraded, and imbruted by its fellows. They grasped not only the whole race of man then living, but they reached forward and seized upon the farthest posterity. \* \* \* Wise statesmen they were, they knew the tendency of prosperity to breed tyrants, and so they es-



tablished these great self-evident truths, and when in the distant future some man, some faction, some interest, should set up the doctrine that none but rich men, or none but white men, or none but Anglo-Saxon white men were entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, their posterity might look up again to the Declaration of Independence and take courage to renew the battle which their fathers began, so that truth, and justice and mercy, and all the human and Christian virtues might not be extinguished from the land; so that no man would hereafter dare to limit and circumscribe the great principles on which the temple of liberty was being built.

“Now, my countrymen, if you have been taught doctrines conflicting with the great landmarks of the Declaration of Independence; if you have listened to suggestion which would take away from its grandeur and mutilate the fair symmetry of its proportions; if you have been inclined to believe that all men are not created equal in those inalienable rights enumerated by our chart of liberty, let me entreat you to come back. Return to the fountain whose waters spring close by the blood of the revolution. Think nothing of me, take no thought of the political fate of any man whomsoever, but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence. You may do anything with me you choose, if you will but

heed those sacred principles. You may not only defeat me for the senate, but you may take me and put me to death. While pretending no indifference to earthly honors, I do claim to be actuated in this contest, by something higher than an anxiety for office. I charge you to drop every paltry and insignificant thought of any man's success. It is nothing; I am nothing; Judge Douglas is nothing. But do not destroy that immortal emblem of humanity, the Declaration of Independence."

These extracts show more clearly than anything else can, the profound difference between the brilliant debater, the champion of popular sovereignty, and the great statesman, the champion of the oppressed race. The difference was a moral difference. Lincoln always went back to the deep sources of popular government, while Douglas' was skilfully setting forth his veneered doctrine of popular sovereignty.

The second debate of the series was held at Freeport, and it was here that fate wrought mightily with the destinies of the republic. For in its effects, both immediate and ultimate, upon the politics of our land this discussion has never had its equal.

At Ottawa, during the progress of the first debate, Douglas had addressed a series of seven questions to Lincoln. These were so artfully arranged in substance and manner, that Douglas felt to a certainty that

their answers would enmesh Lincoln in the web of defeat. He had underrated the shrewdness of his antagonist. At Freeport, Lincoln answered every question unequivocally and with perfect frankness, and in turn addressed to Douglas four other questions. The second of these read as follows: "Can the people of a territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a state constitution?" This was a thrust to the heart. For, if he answered "No" his people would turn against him almost to a man, and if he answered "Yes" the Democrats of the south, upon whom he depended for his election to the presidency, would spurn him with contempt.

The popular-sovereignty doctrine rested upon the theory that the people of a territory had a right to vote slavery in or out, as they wished. Douglas had written into his Kansas-Nebraska bill that such right was "subject to the constitution." Soon after, the Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott case, had decided that the constitution gave congress no power to prohibit slavery in the territories, nor that it could authorize a territorial legislature to prohibit it. The Supreme Court had thus virtually declared popular sovereignty unconstitutional; it had pricked the glittering globule of Douglas's statesmanship. Now, if Douglas answered

Lincoln's question in the affirmative, what would become of the Supreme Court decision? If he answered in the negative, what would become of the senatorship? Lincoln had foreseen this dilemma. To his friends, who had advised him against asking the question, he replied that Douglas could never answer that question and be both senator and President. "But," they persisted, "if you do ask him, he will never answer 'no,' and you cannot then be elected senator." "I am killing larger game," he rejoined. "If Douglas answers that way, he can not be made President in 1860, and that battle will be bigger than this one."

The intrepid Douglas did not hesitate to answer. Skilled in parry and thrust, practiced in the tactics of flank movements, the veteran debater faced this crisis of his career without hesitation. This was his answer: "I answer emphatically, as Mr. Lincoln has heard me answer a hundred times from every stump in Illinois, that in my opinion the people of a territory can, by lawful means, exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a state constitution. Mr. Lincoln knew that I had answered that question over and over again. He heard me argue the Nebraska bill on that principle all over the state in 1854, in 1855 and in 1856, and he has no excuse for pretending to be in doubt as to my position on that question. It matters not what way the Supreme

Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question, whether slavery may or may not go into a territory under the constitution. The people have the lawful means to introduce or exclude it, as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulation. These police regulations can only be established by the local legislature, and if the people are opposed to slavery, they will elect representatives to that body who will, by unfriendly legislation, effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favor its extension. Hence, no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a slave territory or a free territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska bill. I hope Mr. Lincoln deems my answer satisfactory on that point."

There was no reason why the far-sighted Lincoln should not deem his answer wholly satisfactory. For he knew time would make transparent its cloudy opalescence, and that the people would sooner or later see through the pitiable subterfuge. The crowd at Freeport cheered the answer tremendously. Douglas had a wonderfully effective way of delivering his sentences, and it was no doubt his straightforward, defiant, masterful manner that carried his "Freeport

doctrine" through the campaign, quite as much as the words that so skilfully framed it.

Lincoln's reply was characteristic. He said that Douglas's dodge on the Dred Scott decision directed people to believe "that a thing may be lawfully driven away from where it has a lawful right to be." Quaintly, and with unanswerable directness, he portrayed the predicament of a man elected to a territorial legislature, who took oath that he would support the constitution of the United States, and then violated that oath by passing police regulations unfavorable to slavery. "Why, this is a monstrous sort of talk about the constitution of the United States," he exclaimed. "There has never been as outlandish and lawless a doctrine from the mouth of any respectable man on earth. I do not believe it is a constitutional right to hold slaves in a territory of the United States. I believe the decision was improperly made and I go for reversing it. Judge Douglas is furious against those who go for reversing a decision, but he is for legislating it out of all force, while the law itself stands."

There remains no doubt that Lincoln's was the sounder jurisprudence. He was Douglas's peer as a student of history, and as a constitutional lawyer. The house of Douglas's statesmanship was builded upon the sands of expediency; Lincoln's upon the granite of truth.





But the peerless debater won his fight. He made the multitudes believe that he had parried Lincoln's deadly Freeport thrust. His great prestige abroad, and the affection of the Democracy at home, united with his marvelous strategy, expediency, and oratory to place him again into the senatorial chair. His majority on a joint vote of the two houses of the legislature was only about eight votes. The Republicans polled nearly four thousand more votes in the state than the Democrats. But the apportionment of seats in the legislature was based upon the census of 1850, and was more favorable to the Democrats than to the Republicans.

The personal popularity of Douglas is not to be measured by the closeness of this margin. For twenty years he had been the idol of his state, and the people were not willing to withdraw from him their affections, even though they might withhold their votes. Everywhere he was greeted by enormous throngs, and his sentiments were echoed in a surfeit of wild applause. There were no stay-at-home voters in Illinois that year.

The campaign of enthusiasm closed with a mammoth rally, held in Chicago the night before election. Through rain and mud, the Republicans marched in an enormous torchlight parade, so popular in those days; while the Democrats gathered in a half-dozen large meetings, where they awaited

patiently in the rain, the arrival of Douglas, who addressed each meeting. Douglas had made a fortune in Chicago real estate, and his campaign cost him forty thousand dollars. Lincoln, out of his poverty, could give little more than his personal expenses. He confided to a friend that the campaign had cost him "nigh unto five hundred dollars."

Buchanan had tried his utmost to compass the defeat of Douglas. He had barred his friends from federal patronage; he deposed the postmaster of Chicago, Douglas's most intimate political friend; he sent emissaries and money into the state; he turned all the power and odium of the administration against him. A more potent combination cannot confront a candidate, and the triumph of Douglas was not unlike that of Gladstone in 1880.

On the other hand the reader must not forget that Horace Greeley, and Chittenden, of Kentucky, with other Republicans and former Whig leaders, urged the election of Douglas because of this very alienation between the President and the Senator.

This debate occurred at a critical time in our history, and its influence upon our politics was far-reaching. In the first place, the debaters discarded all other issues, and concentrated their power upon the slavery question. This at once defined the issue for the coming Presidential campaign in 1860. After the Lincoln-Douglas debate

there could be no other issue until this one was settled. In the second place, the answer of Douglas to the Freeport question was the wedge that split in twain the great Democratic party. Deeper and deeper this wedge was driven by northern conscience and southern wilfulness, until a mighty party, with great traditions, fell asunder. And thirdly, Abraham Lincoln became not only the destroyer, but also the creator of a national party. With one direct question he had broken the Democracy; by his simple, honest words, he called into life the slumbering convictions of the north, and amalgamated them into a unified national Republican party. His utterances were immediately seized upon by the Republicans of every state, as the expression of their own belief. His words became the creed of the new party.

Upon the political fortunes of Douglas the debate had a blighting effect. Lincoln proved a true prophet. The answer to the second Freeport question made a senator, and unmade a president. But the prophet probably did not foresee that the answer also made a president. Douglas had offended the nationalizers of slavery by his attitude on the Lecompton constitution; he added the unpardonable sin to his political shortcomings when he announced that he believed the people of a territory had the right, somehow, to prohibit slavery in their

territory. The Buchanan papers hurled their opprobrious epithets at him; and the leaders of the southern Democrats were outspoken in their denunciations, while Buchanan and his cabinet were determined to read him entirely out of the party.

Senator Benjamin, of Louisiana, in a speech in the senate, made shortly after the Charleston convention, stated the case for his co-workers in the vineyard of slavery. After confessing his former love for Douglas, he traced the gradual apostasy of the senator, and thus summed up the charges of the south: "We accuse him for this, to-wit: that, having bargained with us upon a point upon which we were at issue, that it should be considered a judicial point, that he would abide the decision; that he would act under the decision, and consider it a doctrine of the party; that having said that to us here in the senate, he went home, and under the stress of a local election, his knees gave way; his whole person trembled. His adversary stood upon principles and was beaten, and lo! he is the candidate of a mighty party for the presidency of the United States. The senator from Illinois faltered. He got the prize for which he faltered; but lo! the grand prize of his ambition today slips from his grasp because of his faltering in his former contest, and his success in the canvass for the senate, purchased for an ignoble price, has cost him

the loss of the Presidency of the United States."

This was the attitude of the southern orthodoxy. It charged heresy, and it prescribed the penalty, excommunication. But the apostate high priest was not to be unfrocked by editorials, or speeches, or threats. Douglas was never afraid of a contest. He first tried to win over the south by cajoling. When that failed, he fought, and in a fight he was the equal of Andrew Jackson.

The first important step of the administration to deprive Douglas of power, was taken at the session of congress that convened soon after the election. He was deposed from the chairmanship of the committee on territories. This blow was planned at a secret caucus, and before Douglas had returned to Washington. It was a partisan deed that proved very unpopular throughout the north. Douglas had made a brilliant chairman during a period of our history when the committee was the most important one in congress. During the thirteen years that he held the position, two in the house and eleven in the senate, he had guided six territories into statehood, and had organized seven territorial governments. His splendid record was deserving of better treatment.

Immediately after the election Douglas tried to set himself right with the south. Assured of the senatorship, he set about to

make sure of the Democratic nomination for the presidency. In his zeal to conciliate the south, he advanced some very rash and unworthy doctrines about slavery. He made a journey to Louisiana three weeks after his election. At Memphis and New Orleans he was received with pomp and ceremony by committees of prominent citizens. Vast throngs of people assembled to hear him speak, and bands, cannon and fireworks aroused the enthusiasm of the populace. His speeches were very adroit and cunning combinations of his theory of unfriendly legislation, of his belief in rampant expansion to embrace the whole continent and the island of Cuba, and of his new and advanced view of slavery. This doctrine of slavery was purely economic. He said: "Whenever a territory has a climate, a soil and production making it the interest of the inhabitants to encourage slave property, they will pass a slave code." The inexorable laws of economics would regulate slavery. It was not a question of humanity. In the cotton belt it was a question between the negro and the crocodile, and he would side with the negro. But if it became a question of white man or black man, he would always be for the white man. The Almighty made some lands that needed the labor of the negro, and therein slavery was fore-ordained. And in his New Orleans speech he added: "It is a law of humanity, a law



of civilization, that whenever a man or a race of men show themselves incapable of managing their own affairs, they must consent to be governed by those who are capable of performing the duty. It is on this principle that you establish these institutions of charity for the support of the blind, or the deaf and dumb, or the insane. In accordance with this principle, I assert that the negro race, under all circumstances, at all times, and in all countries, has shown itself incapable of self-government." Would Douglas have made this remarkable assertion in Illinois? Would he have made it in the presence of Lincoln?

It was January, 1859, before the reëlected senator returned to Washington. There he quickly found that his southern speeches had utterly failed to reconcile the hotspurs of the administration. But to his everlasting credit, Douglas would not stir from his position that congress could not force slavery upon an unwilling territory. In an extended altercation with Senator Brown, of Mississippi, on February 23rd, he said, with great earnestness: "If you repudiate the doctrine of non-intervention, and form a slave code by act of congress, where the people of a territory refuse it, you must step off the Democratic platform. We will let you depart in peace, as you no longer belong to us; you are no longer of us when you adopt the principle of congressional inter-

vention in violation of the Democratic creed. I stand here defending the great principle of non-intervention by congress, and self-government by the people of the territories. That is the Democratic creed. The Democracy in the northern states have so understood it. No northern democratic state would ever have voted for Mr. Buchanan but for the fact that he was understood to occupy that position. Gentlemen of the southern states, I tell you in all candor, that I do not believe a Democratic candidate can ever carry away one northern Democratic state on the platform that it is the duty of the federal government to force the people of a territory to have slavery when they do not want it. But if the true principles of state rights and popular sovereignty be maintained and carried out in good faith, as set forth in the Nebraska bill, and as understood by the people in 1856, a glorious future awaits the Democracy."

Was it possible that Douglas did not discern the secret motive of the extremists in urging this schism? They were not seeking his advice. They were wilfully hastening events that would offer them an ostensible excuse for dividing, not alone their party, but also their country.

After the adjournment of congress, Douglas received a letter from his friend J. B. Dorr, of Iowa, asking him whether he would permit his name to be presented as candi-

date for the presidential nomination in the Charleston convention, to be held the following year. This was his answer:

“Before the question can be finally determined, it will be necessary to understand distinctly upon what issue the canvass is to be conducted. If, as I have full faith they will, the Democratic party shall determine, in the presidential election of 1860, to adhere to the principle embodied in the compromise measures of 1850, and ratified by the people in the presidential election of 1852, and reaffirmed in the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, and incorporated into the Cincinnati platform of 1856, as expounded by Mr. Buchanan in his letter accepting the nomination and approved by the people, in that event my friends will be at liberty to present my name to the convention if they see proper to do so. If, on the contrary, it shall become the policy of the Democratic party—which I cannot anticipate—to repudiate these, their time-honored principles, on which we have achieved so many patriotic triumphs, and if, in lieu of them, the convention shall interpolate into the creed of the party such new issues as the revival of the African slave trade, or a congressional slave code for the territories, or the doctrine that the constitution of the United States either establishes or prohibits slavery in the territories, beyond the power of the people to control it as other property,

it is due to candor to say that, in such an event, I could not accept the nomination if tendered to me."

This frank letter was given a wide circulation. It was interpreted by the south as a threat that Douglas meant to remain the leader of the party at all hazards; in the north as a manly appeal to all Democrats to stand by the established principles of state rights. The slavery extensionists redoubled their endeavors to get rid of Douglas, but they only multiplied his energy and quickened his aggressiveness. He was determined to hold his wing of the party together. He carried the fight for his Democracy into every northern state. He used every weapon known to the political strategist. In September, 1859, he published an article in "*Harper's Magazine*" in which he tried to show, by a careful, historical analysis, "the dividing line between local and federal authority." He traced the principles of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill back to colonial times, and maintained that the power to exclude slavery from the territories was not one of the prohibited powers enumerated in the constitution.

His ingenious method of political warfare caused some consternation among the administration Democrats, and Buchanan designated his attorney general, Judge Black, as his defender. Black wrote his answer into an anonymous pamphlet, in which he

characterized the essay as "an unsuccessful effort at legal precision; like the writing of a judge who is trying in vain to give good reasons for a wrong decision on a quotation of law which he has not quite mastered."

Douglas was campaigning in Ohio when the pamphlet appeared, and he answered it in a speech at Wooster. To this, Black wrote a rejoinder, and the war of pamphlets supplemented the war of the hustings. Douglas had the final shot: "To separate Mr. Douglas from the Democratic party, seems to be the patriotic end to which they all aim. They may as well make up their minds to believe, if they have not already been convinced of the fact by the bitter experience of the last two years, that the thing cannot be done. I gave them notice at the initial point of this crusade, that no man, or set of men on earth, save one, could separate me from the Democratic party, and as I was that one, and the only one who had the power, I did not intend to do it myself nor permit it to be done by others."

It was a magnificent fight that Douglas waged against his enemies within the party. It was a struggle of national magnitude, and the nation followed him with eager anticipation. In Ohio, where he had engaged to make several speeches, he combated not only administration Democrats but he found his old rival, Lincoln, who had followed him into Ohio to make some campaign speeches.

Indeed, the Lincoln-Douglas debate did not end until the fateful election of 1860 made of these rivals co-workers in the cause of nationalism.

Events now crowded one another with alarming haste. In the midst of the state campaigns of 1859, John Brown startled the country with his insane attempt to emancipate the slaves in the neighborhood of Harper's Ferry by force of arms. Whatever may be the judgment of history upon this uncouth character, the blended product of New England piety, frontier bravado and insane delusion, upon the tense political situation of his day, his miserable, miscarried plans had the most dire effects. The north was humiliated, the south was made delirious. Fear of slave insurrections lurked always in the hearts of the slave masters. It stalked among them like a death dealing spectre. Now they pointed to Harper's Ferry as an object lesson of republican intentions. In congress they immediately appointed a committee of investigation. The committee sought in vain for proof that John Brown was instigated by Republicans, and that the party was responsible for his raid. Nor could they even call the seizure of the arsenal a treasonable act as defined by the constitution; but they were compelled to report it "simply the act of lawless ruffians under the sanction of no public or political authority." The minority report



of the committee sought to prove that the episode was a direct outgrowth of border ruffianism in Kansas.

The debate upon these reports was the occasion of bitter taunts and maledictions. In the house, parliamentary babel reigned for over two months, while the fire-eaters of the south and the determined conservatives of the north were grappling with each other for the speakership. In the senate a bill was reported from the judiciary committee "for the protection of each state and territory of the Union against invasion by the authorities or inhabitants of any other state."

Douglas announced that on the 23rd of January he would address the senate upon this bill. He was the commanding figure of this congressional struggle for unity in the Democratic party, for unity in our nation. Although he was not to speak until 2 o'clock in the afternoon, long before the hour of noon the galleries were packed. Almost the entire house of representatives shared the floor with the senators. Douglas spoke to the nation. If any one expected that he would depart from the landmarks of his former statesmanship, and espouse the doctrines of Jefferson Davis and Buchanan, or if any came expecting to hear new theories of slavery, or to find a new panacea for the nation's great woe, they were disappointed. But those who gathered in that notable

throng expecting to hear a brilliant exposition of the doctrine of state sovereignty, as consistently preached by its high priest for so many years, were gratified beyond measure. Douglas said nothing new. He had long ago found the ultimate capacity of his theory of state sovereignty. He was trying to recall the Democratic dissenters by turning them against the Republicans. "The Harper's Ferry Crime" he called "the natural, logical, inevitable result of the teachings of the Republican party. The great principle that underlies the organization of the Republican party is violent, irreconcilable, eternal warfare upon the institution of American slavery, with the view of its ultimate extinction throughout the land; sectional war is to be waged until the cotton fields of the south shall be cultivated by free labor, or the rye fields of New York and Massachusetts shall be cultivated by slave labor." He reiterated his belief that "the question of slavery is one of climate and political economy, of self-interest, not a question of legislation." "You cannot force slavery by all the acts of congress you may make," he tells the south, "on one inch of territory, against the will of the people." "And you cannot," he told the north, "by any law you can make, keep it from one inch of American territory where the people want it." And for the thousandth time he exclaims: "My object is to establish firmly

the doctrine that each state is to do its own voting, establish its own institutions, make its own laws without interference, directly or indirectly, from any outside power."

The slave-masters were out of the reach of any state rights arguments. They had for several years abandoned that basis of action. They had shifted onto the basis that the constitution legalized slavery in the territories, whether the people wanted it or not. They could therefore not be satisfied with Douglas. His speech merely aroused their anger and intensified the venom of their attacks.

And the Republicans: it was not expected that they would be moved by such an appeal. Of Seward, Douglas said: "His entire argument rests upon the assumption that the negro and the white man were equal by divine law, and hence all laws and constitutions and governments in violation of the principle of negro equality are in violation of the law of God." And he proceeded to show, in his own peculiar and misleading and demagogical manner how this would set the constitution of the United States in conflict with the divine law, and thus either make divine law unconstitutional or the constitution an instrument of iniquity. How could such rant win a conscience-possessioned people?

Here, then, you see the position of Stephen A. Douglas in the opening of the eventful

year 1860. His country is divided upon the question of slavery. One portion believes slavery to be a necessary institution, therefore a divine institution, sanctioned by God, by the constitution and by the practice of the people; the other portion believes slavery to be wrong, equally in conflict with the divine will and the Declaration of Independence and the interests of civilization. One portion believes that the constitution carries this institution into every territory; the other portion believes that the constitution meant merely to tolerate slavery where it existed in 1787. One portion believes that a state can declare itself independent of the Union; the other portion believes that Union could not be ruptured by any voluntary act of any state. Both portions were fierce in their determination; both were relentless, unforgiving, unyielding. There was a third portion that remained neutral, rather hoping for the ultimate extinction of slavery, but unwilling to make it the cause for rupture.

His party he found likewise divided. The southern wing was led by Jefferson Davis. Step by step they had advanced from the position of passive toleration of slavery to the position of aggressive expansion of slave territory. It was no longer the Democracy of Jackson or even of Calhoun. It was the Democracy of Taney, the Democracy that had rephrased the philosophy of

the republic, and reformed the theory of our constitution; the Democracy that by subtle and potent influence had spread its power over the land, had possessed itself of President and Cabinet, of House and Senate, of even the Supreme Court, had advanced from the compromise of 1820 to that of 1850, from the compromise of 1850 to the Kansas-Nebraska bill, from the Kansas-Nebraska bill to the Dred Scott decision, and from the Dred Scott decision to the struggle for Le-compton. Like a deadly paralysis, its icy chill was creeping over the body politic. Already the Declaration of Independence was writhing under its baneful grasp and the constitution was palsied by its blighting touch.

This wing of the party was led by Jefferson Davis, a man of great ability, terse in speech, pointed in argument, gentle in manner, brave in action, who had learned Calhoun's doctrine that the territory is the co-partner of the state, and that a citizen going from a state into a territory, took the laws of his state with him. This doctrine he hoarded until the time was propitious for its wider promulgation. He was not a profound man, neither was he erratic, but he was persistent. The conspicuous part he played in the drama of secession has invested him with an odium that only time can dispel.

The northern wing of the party was, of course, led by Douglas. As has been shown many times, he believed absolutely in home

rule. His followers were willing to let slavery alone and adhered strictly to his well-worn doctrine of popular sovereignty. They were determined not to surrender to the administration forces, nor to give way to the prestige that the new Republican party was rapidly gaining throughout the north. They were between the upper and the nether millstones, the millstone of southern obstinacy and the millstone of northern conviction. Their fate was sealed by their neutrality. For at a time of a national crisis, neutrals are not wanted. And the year 1860 marked the culmination of the political crisis that was begun when the slavery compromises were written into the constitution of the United States, the political crisis that culminated in the civil war.

The Douglas Democrats did not expect that war. The north did not believe the south would precipitate a war, a civil war. They failed to discover the significance of events, skilfully concealed by the slave-masters under the cloak of Buchanan's administration. So Republicans and Douglas Democrats went boldly almost merrily forward to meet the political campaigns of that eventful year. Had they been less innocent of the motives of the south, their eyes would early have been opened to the true situation.

For on the 2nd of February Jefferson Davis introduced his noted resolutions, setting forth the doctrines that his party would



promulgate in the campaign. There were six resolutions. They affirmed the sovereignty of the states, and their absolute equality; they declared negro slavery an established institution in fifteen states, protected by the constitution, and therefore it should be let alone by all the other states; they insisted that slave owners could take their property into territories, and that if the judicial executive authority failed to protect it, then it became the duty of congress to do so; and finally the resolutions declared that only when about to form its first state constitution, could the people of a territory "decide for themselves whether slavery as a domestic institution shall be sustained or prohibited within their jurisdiction."

The object of these resolutions was to stultify the effect of Douglas's letter to Dorr, to crystallize the creed of Democracy before the national convention, which was called to convene in Charleston on April 23rd. But Davis could not hasten a vote, and the debate extended far into May. It was evident from the utterances that this debate brought forth, that the southern leaders were growing more determined with every recurring day to rid themselves of Douglas. They went into the Charleston convention determined to force their views upon the great national party, which they had controlled for so many years. They had had their way so often, so easily and for so long,

that they never dreamed of the capacity of the northern Democrats for manly resistance and independence.

Douglas was the preëminent man of this convention. Seven northwestern states had given him the prestige of solid delegations, aggregating one hundred and thirty-two votes. These alone represented six hundred thousand Democratic voters, or as many as the entire fifteen slave states could produce, and one-third of the entire Democratic vote of the Union. He was unquestionably the most popular man in the party with a wonderful capacity for inspiring hero worship, and by far the ablest exponent of the non-interference doctrine. He had a majority of the delegates, but not a majority of the states, so his enemies captured the machinery of the convention by having all the committees appointed and the officers elected by states. Caleb Cushing, of Massachusetts, an ardent friend of Buchanan, was made chairman.

The great struggle was over the platform, for Douglas had said in his Dorr letter, and in many public utterances, that he would not stand on a platform that did not embody popular sovereignty. If the platform could be made by the south then this troublesome man would be put out of the way. The platform committee, accordingly, held the key of the convention, and it locked the door upon Douglas. Three days and three

nights this committee wrestled with the slavery plank. They could not unite and brought in two reports. The majority report read by Avery, of North Carolina, embraced the doctrines of the Senate resolutions introduced by Jefferson Davis. The minority report read by Payne, of Ohio, resolved, "That all questions in regard to the rights of property in states or territories, arising under the constitution of the United States are judicial in their character; and the Democratic party is pledged to abide by and faithfully carry out such determination of these questions as has been or may be made by the Supreme Court of the United States."

The south spurned even this mild statement. They were determined upon having their own way. But the north was also determined. Senator Payne closed his plea for the minority report with the words: "I repeat that upon this question of congressional non-intervention we are committed by the acts of congress; we are committed by the acts of the national Democratic convention; we cannot recede without personal dishonor, and, so help us God, we never will recede!"

Yancey, the Machiavelli of the cotton states, smilingly replied that the north would then invite defeat. They had been losing ground before the onrush of their Republican adversaries because they had dared to admit slavery to be a wrong; they must

recede, rather, from this ignoble view of a great domestic institution, and must embrace the higher faith, that slavery must be protected by congress in every territory, if they would join again in songs of triumph.

This speech was received with thundering applause by the galleries, crowded with Charleston citizens. Senator Pugh, of Ohio, was on his feet in an instant. Indignantly he retorted that the spread of the Republican party was due to the ever increasing demands of the slave states. His brethren from the north are now asked to bury their faces in the dust of humiliation. "Gentlemen of the south," he cried, "you mistake us. We will not do it!" No applause from the galleries greeted this ringing challenge. Instead, there was the deathlike silence that foretokens the cyclone.

The re-committal of the platform to the committee availed not. Neither did Benjamin F. Butler's suggestion that the convention simply reaffirm the Cincinnati platform.

On Monday, April 30th, on the seventh day of the convention, the storm broke, a storm that had been gathering for years. By a vote of 165 to 138 it was voted to substitute the minority for the majority report.

Yancey's time had come. He had planned for it and was ready. He arose amid the turbulent throng and led from the hall the sullen south. Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Ar-

kansas, and a portion of Georgia, followed him. The Democratic party was no longer national.

There remained a majority of the whole number of delegates. Fifty-seven ballots they cast for the Presidential nomination, but Douglas could not secure the requisite two-thirds. The convention determined to adjourn to meet in Baltimore on the 18th of June. They asked the party organization in the states whose delegates had left the convention, to fill their places, and hoped that in the interval of six weeks, the sober second judgment of the southern leaders would bring them to repentance. Meanwhile the seceding delegates organized a convention of their own. They adopted the majority report of the platform committee, spent their surplus energy in four days of speech making, and adjourned to meet in Richmond on the eleventh of June.

All hope that the interval might bring calm reflection and sweet reconciliation was vain. Bitter and sweet water cannot flow from the same well. Slavery had been the perennial source of too much bitterness to be now transformed into a wellspring of wholesome coöperation with the north.

Jefferson Davis, the master of the situation, began a terrific and vindictive onslaught upon "squatter sovereignty" from his place in the senate on May 7th. He declared it the deadly Upas, that had poisoned the

whole land. Douglas flashed back that a congressional caucus had no right to create new articles of faith for the Democratic party. The great principle of Democracy was that the majority ruled. "And now," he asked, "shall the majority surrender to the minority?" Anyone who demanded this was not a Democrat. Davis placidly replied that by his fight on Lecompton, Douglas put himself outside the party. He dared the Douglas Democrats to act without the south. The Cotton States would not submit to northern dictation.

Thus they fought for two weeks, these giants of the opposing factions. With every word, they drove farther asunder the two sections. On the 25th of May the Davis resolution passed the senate by a vote of two to one.

A week before this vote was taken, May 16th, occurred another event that made it still more impossible for Jefferson Davis and Stephen A. Douglas to weld their differences and to reunite the party. On that day the national Republican convention met in Chicago. There were no delegates from the south. It was a northern party; it adopted a northern platform; it nominated a northern man for President and a northern man for Vice-President. When the south learned that Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, the earnest defender of the proposition that slavery is a wrong, had been named for President,



and that Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, an able and ardent advocate of slavery restriction had been named for Vice-President, upon a platform that declared unequivocally "that the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom" and that denied "the authority of congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States," their determination to force their views upon the Democratic party became unalterably fixed.

And when these southern slave-masters learned further that the remnants of the old Whig party, still powerful in the border states, had reorganized under the name of "The Constitutional Union Party," and had nominated John Bell, of Tennessee, for President, and Edward Everett, of Massachusetts, for Vice-President, both statesmen of the old school, devoted to reconciliation and compromise, upon the simple, laconic platform, "The constitution of the country, the union of the states and the enforcement of the constitution," they fully and finally realized that it was absolutely necessary for them to cohere in their isolation, and to repel all advances for reuniting the party. From their viewpoint, there was but one course to pursue. If the national Democratic party would not bow to them, they would break the party upon the rocks of

secession. At all hazards they would keep their section a "solid south."

According to adjournment, the Davis Democrats met in Richmond. There was not a trace of conciliatory disposition. Four days were spent in aimless talking, when they recessed to meet in Baltimore on the 28th. They were evidently waiting to see what the Douglas Democrats would do. Perhaps the action of the erstwhile "Know-nothing" party, in nominating Bell and Everett, made them uneasy. It was a danger they had not counted on.

The northern Democrats also met pursuant to adjournment, in Baltimore. There was here neither spirit of forgiveness nor of harmony. Chaos reigned, and wild confusion. Some of the states that had left the hall in Charleston had sent contesting delegates, and these were as water poured upon molten iron. For days the parliamentary tumult continued. To the bitterness of political discussion was added personal rancor. The speakers exhausted every name in the vocabulary of crimination, and every adjective in the dictionary of defamation. At night, the leaders harangued the crowds at rival mass meetings. The populace caught the inflammation of discord and added their spectacular demonstration to the evidences of an enduring rupture.

Douglas, hearing of the turmoil, sent a telegram to his friends, suggesting that peace

might be restored to party and country, if his name were withdrawn, and a compromise candidate named. But his managers suppressed the telegram. It is probable that the division had grown so wide that no candidate could have been found, agreeable to both factions.

On the fifth day, the president of the convention, Caleb Cushing, resigned his seat and left the hall. He took with him that portion of the south that had not seceded at Charleston, namely, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee; the border states, Maryland and Kentucky, and the two northern states, California and Delaware. These he ushered into Maryland Institute Hall, where Yancey and his extremists met, and there was organized finally, for the nomination of presidential candidates, the Democracy of the South. John C. Breckenridge, of Kentucky, was named for President, and Joseph Lane, of Oregon, for Vice-President. They adhered to the custom of naming one candidate from each section. As Yancey had for many years secretly plotted this movement of secession, had been the master-spirit of the intrigue in Charleston, Richmond and Baltimore, it was only fitting that he pronounce his unholy benediction upon the terrible work he had accomplished. With his customary complacency and sinister smile, he told the mob that he was not for the Union *per se*, nor against the Union *per se*. But he

was for the constitution. He believed that *as yet* the Union was safe, because Democracy was safe. His treasonable suggestion that the election alone could determine how long the Union would be safe, was received with a wild howl of approval.

The regular Democratic convention nominated Douglas for President on the first ballot by an almost unanimous vote. Fitzpatrick, of Alabama, was named for Vice-President, but he refused the honor, and H. V. Johnson, of Georgia, was named in his stead. After the nominations had been made, William A. Richardson, of Illinois, Douglas's manager, read a letter from Douglas, dated at Washington, June 20th. In this letter Douglas deplores the demoralization of the party. "I firmly and conscientiously believe that there is no safety for this country, no hope for the preservation of the Union, except by a faithful and rigid adherence to the doctrine of non-intervention by congress with slavery in the territories. Intervention means disunion. There is no difference in principle between northern and southern intervention. The one intervenes for slavery, the other against slavery; but each appeals to the passions and prejudices of his own section against the peace of the whole country and the rights of self-government by the people of the territories. Hence the doctrine of non-intervention must be maintained at all hazards. But while I can never

sacrifice the principle, even to obtain the Presidency, I will cheerfully and joyfully sacrifice myself to maintain the principle. If, therefore, you and my other friends who have stood by me with such heroic firmness at Charleston and Baltimore, shall be of the opinion that the principle can be preserved, and the unity and ascendancy of the Democratic party maintained, and the country saved from the perils of northern abolitionism and southern disunion, by withdrawing my name and uniting with some other non-intervention, Union loving Democrat, I beseech you to pursue that course. \* \* \* This letter is prompted by the same motives which induced my dispatch four years ago, withdrawing my name from the Cincinnati convention."

His followers, evidently, did not believe that a recurrence of the Cincinnati compromise was wise or possible. They were probably right, for the extremists had driven their work to such a latitude, that the man did not live upon whom both factions could agree.

In his letter of acceptance, Douglas once more expressed his profound conviction that peace and union could only be maintained if the people of every territory were let alone to govern themselves. "If the power and the duty of federal interference is to be conceded, two hostile, sectional parties must be the result, the one inflaming the passions

and ambitions of the north, the other of the south, and each struggling to use the federal power and authority for the aggrandizement of its own section, at the expense of the equal rights of the other, and in derogation of those fundamental principles of self-government which were firmly established in this country by the American Revolution as the basis of our entire Republican system.

“During the memorable period of our political history, when the advocates of federal intervention upon the subject of slavery in the territories had well nigh ‘precipitated the country into a revolution,’ the northern interventionists demanding the Wilmot Proviso for the prohibition of slavery, and the southern interventionists, then few in number and without a single representative in congress, insisting upon congressional legislation for the protection of slavery in opposition to the wishes of the people in either case, it will be remembered that it required all the wisdom, power and influence of Clay and a Webster and a Cass, supported by the conservative and patriotic men of the Whig and Democratic parties of that day, to devise and carry out a line of policy which would restore peace to the country and stability to the Union. The essential living principle of that policy, as applied to the legislation of 1850, was, and now is, *non-intervention by congress with slavery in the territories*. The fair application of this just



and equitable principle restored harmony and fraternity to a distracted country. If we now depart from that wise and just policy which produced these happy results, and permit the country to be again distracted; if precipitated into revolution by a sectional contest between pro-slavery and anti-slavery interventionists, where shall we look for another Clay, another Webster, or another Cass to pilot the ship of state over the breakers into a haven of peace and safety?

“The Federal Union must be preserved. The constitution must be maintained inviolate in all its parts. Every right guaranteed by the constitution must be protected by law, in all cases where legislation is necessary to its engagement. The judicial authority as provided in the constitution must be sustained, and its decisions implicitly obeyed and faithfully executed. The laws must be administered and the constituted authorities upheld, and all unlawful resistance to these things must be put down with firmness, impartiality and fidelity if we expect to enjoy and transmit unimpaired to our posterity, that blessed inheritance which we have received in trust from the patriots and sages of the Revolution.”

This letter is transcribed in full because it portrays more clearly than any other words can, the attitude of Douglas, in this time of the nation's most fateful Presidential election. The words are not those of a pan-

dering politician, nor those of a sage who abhors slavery because it is wrong, but they are the utterances of a conservative statesman who loves his country, and its established customs, and who draws his inspiration from the days of Clay and of Cass, the days of conciliating Whigs and Democrats.

Is it possible that Douglas did not perceive that these days were long past, never to recur; that in place of Democrats who were willing to compromise on 36° 30', he was confronted by slavery Democrats who knew neither latitude nor longitude; that in place of gentle, conciliating Whigs, he was face to face with Republicans who ardently believed that slavery was a sin? Is it possible that a man of such political sagacity and instinct could not discern that the issue was not his perversion of the Compromise of 1850, nor yet his misjudgment of the Dred Scott decision, but was the question of slavery? Not slavery as a political issue, nor yet as an economic expedient, or a constitutional compromise, but slavery as a *moral issue*. But this was the centre of controversy.

The contest, then, was fourfold.

Only one of the parties represented the old issues, in old-fashioned form. Bell and Everett of the Constitutional Union Party, were old-time Whigs, but little tinged with know-nothingism. They lived in the past, they moved in the atmosphere of Webster

and of Clay. They were gentlemen of the old school, grave, dignified, genteel, learned free from the rough boisterousness that had invaded politics during the preceding decade. Their statesmanship was founded on compromise, and their jurisprudence upon arbitration. The rampant demonstrations of the younger politicians they considered as dangerous. In sharp contrast to these conservatives stood the remaining three parties.

The Douglas Democrats indeed also laid claim to the conservatism of their fathers. But the let-alone policy of their great leader differed radically from the conciliatory policy of his predecessors. What would Van Buren or Jackson have said of Kansas-Nebraska and Dred Scott? What would Thomas Jefferson have said of Douglas's exposition of the Declaration of Independence? It was a far cry from Popular Sovereignty to Clay's compromises.

And the slave-holding Democracy was radicalism run mad. They interpreted Dred Scott to be a universalizing of slavery in all territories, and this interpretation they made their party creed. Even the non-intervention platform adopted in Cincinnati four years before was now too obsolete for them. They thrust their advanced views forward with an impudence and an obstinacy that was the surest guarantee of their defeat.

Lastly the new Republican party met squarely the advanced issue of the southern

Democrats. "Resolved," ran their platform, "that the new dogma that the constitution of its own force, carries slavery into any or all of the territories of the United States is a dangerous political heresy, at variance with explicit provisison of that instrument itself, with contemporaneous exposition, and with legislative and judicial precedent; is revolutionary in its tendencies and subversive of the peace and harmony of the country; that the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom; that, as our Republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, and ordained that no person should be deprived of life, liberty and property without due process of law, it became our duty by legislation, whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this provision of the constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individual, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States."

Thus the southern Democrats and the Republicans were at variance in their reading of our constitutional history; were at antipodes in their constitutional law; and their ideas of national sovereignty were direct antitheses. Both were comparatively new in national politics. But back of all this was sentiment, an attachment for slavery,

and an abhorrence of slavery; the virtue of negro slavery extolled by one, the sinfulness of slavery preached by the other.

In spite of the novelty of these various views, all of the parties equally claimed direct descent from "the fathers." Orthodoxy is as cruel a tyrant in politics as in theology. No matter how madly they flaunted the red flag of radicalism, all of the contestants professed conservatism. And the most conservative of all the candidates was the one who was denounced as the most dangerous radical. It was providential for our Republic that Abraham Lincoln was more conservative than his party.

And so also did all the candidates pledge their personal allegiance to the Union. They all charged each other with disunion sentiments; they all indignantly spurned the charges and professed in speech and letter their attachment for the Union. Bell pledged that, if elected, all of his powers would be devoted to "the maintenance of the constitution, and the Union, against all opposing influences and tendencies." Lincoln said that a Republican victory should establish "the inviolability of the constitution and the perpetual union, harmony and prosperity of all." Douglas never wavered in the conviction that "the federal Union must be preserved." And even Breckenridge could write: "The constitution, and the equality of the states, these are symbols of

everlasting union. Let them be the rallying cries of the people." Therefore each of the four parties claimed to be national parties, not sectional factions.

But they all admitted that there was virtually one issue, slavery, and that issue from its history, and its nature could be only sectional. The drift of the tide was sectional. Mere words could not stem it, hollow professions could not divert it, subterfuge could only delay it. Long before election day the real nature of the issue was revealed. The southern democrats spoke openly of secession if the Republicans should win. They likewise rebelled against the northern Democrats. They would rule, or they would ruin. Destiny decreed that they should do neither.

Still more clearly did events, subsequent to the election, tear away this mask of professed unionism from the faces of the candidates. Bell joined the slave-owners in their war upon the Union, and Breckenridge became a leading actor on the stage of secession. It was a contest of sections; and when the issues of war took the place of the issues of the ballots, each candidate adhered to his section.

Douglas threw himself into the campaign with all his zeal and wonderful energy. The odds were overwhelmingly against him. The Buchanan Democrats fought him with more rancor than the Republicans, and with more effect, because their antagonism



threw the border states into the Bell columns, and prevented his success in several doubtful states of the north. There were attempts by the politicians at fusion between the warring Democratic factions. In New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island they were successful, but in the other states all attempts to bring the Republican opposition together were abortive.

It was ere long apparent that Douglas was fighting a hopeless battle. But he fought it bravely, fiercely, and patriotically. There was no cringing in his attitude. He defied the southern Democracy, and laid bare their true intent to disrupt the Union, as they had disrupted the party. In Baltimore he said: "It is my opinion that there is a mature plan throughout the Southern states to break up the union. I believe the election of a Republican is to be the signal for that attempt, and that the leaders of the scheme desire the election of Lincoln so as to have an excuse for disunion. I do not believe that every Breckenridge man is a disunionist, but I do believe that every disunionist in America is a Breckenridge man." He wore no mask, and the double-meaning sentences of the vote-baiters found no utterances from his lips. When a written question was handed him in Norfolk, Virginia, whether, if elected, he would maintain the Union by force of arms, he boldly replied, without a moment's hesitation: "I answer

emphatically that it is the duty of the President of the United States and all others in authority under him, to enforce the laws of the United States passed by congress, and as the courts expound them, and I, as in duty bound by my oath of fidelity to the constitution, would do all in my power to aid the government of the United States in maintaining the supremacy of the law against all resistance to them, come from what quarter it might. In other words, I think the President, whoever he may be, should treat all attempts to break up the Union by resistance to the laws as Old Hickory treated the nullifiers in 1832."

As, in the days of his youth, he had drawn his political inspiration from Andrew Jackson, so now, in the last and severest struggle of his eventful life, he remained true to the principles of the great defender of nationalism and popular Democracy. In his political philosophy there was no room for the fallacy that the nation was subordinate to its constituent parts. He saw no inconsistency in the proposition that all of the states are co-equal, but that the federal Union is supreme. His vision was national, his conception of the nation included sovereignty, supremacy, perpetuity, and while he was willing to allow each state and territory to decide for itself the all-engrossing question of slavery, he was unreservedly unwilling to allow the caprice of such state or territory

to rend the Union and destroy the nation. This Union, sacred and supreme, he would maintain with the force of arms, and if necessary tie every rebellious state to the federal government with a cordon of federal soldiers.

The American people, also, believed in these fundamental principles. But how many of them foreknew that their full expression would so soon put these axioms of nationalism to the final test? For the election of Abraham Lincoln became the signal for the disruption of the government, and the trial of the cause, whether these United States were a nation or a confederacy.

Lincoln received 180 of the 303 electoral votes. They included all of the northern electors, except three of New Jersey. The south and the border states divided their votes among the other three candidates. Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia gave Bell their thirty-nine electors. The solid south gave its seventy-two votes for Breckenridge. Of the popular vote of the southern states, Bell received 515,973; Breckenridge 571,871, and Douglas only 163,525. But the total popular vote cast for Douglas was 1,365,979. Only the electoral votes of Missouri, together with three votes from New Jersey, a total of 12, were cast for Douglas in the electoral college. But his popular vote exceeded that of every other candidate excepting only the victor. Whatever doubt

existed, of the sectional character of the campaign, now utterly vanished. These figures reveal the geography of the land, as well as its politics. Politics had become sectional. For the first time in many years the north had the government. And now upon the north devolved the sacred duty of keeping it inviolate.

Douglas had been in poor health for some years. The tremendous physical exertion required by his contest with Jefferson Davis, and the southern Democrats, in congress and in the conventions of 1860, and the tremendous strain of the great campaign, left him quite exhausted. And his spirit was utterly broken by the crushing defeat. He was proud, and he was ambitious. Failure was humiliating to his pride and fatal to his ambition. And, above all, the burden of the nation lay heavily upon his heart. Tradition records that on the seventh day of November, when the ballots had been counted, Douglas became a changed man. The cherished hope of his life had eluded him, his body was racked with pain, his country was in imminent peril. The party he had led with such vigor and ambition was shattered. His greatest rival was now his victor.

And to the victor, the vanquished gave his loyal and unflinching support. During those disheartening and disgraceful days that intervened between election day and the inauguration, Douglas was endeavoring to consummate a peaceful settlement of the

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differences that separated the nationalists from the sectionalists. But the fatuity of man overruled the decrees of wisdom. He soon realized that the military preparations of the south meant war; that their bayonets and sabers were sharpened for actual conflict, and their guns and cannons were mounted for a deadly mission. He was quick to advise that blow be given for blow.

Even after the inauguration of Lincoln there lingered a hope that peace might prevail. It was a vain hope. Compromise had failed, popular sovereignty had failed, the issue was squarely between nationalism and sectionalism, and Douglas became a fervid supporter of nationalism.

Lincoln was inaugurated on the fourth day of March. Douglas stood near him and held his beaver hat, as the new President read his conservative first inaugural message. He was seen to nod his head frequently in assent to the calm words of caution, and to those standing near him he said: "That's fair, that's good," when Lincoln made some special point. In the evening, Douglas escorted Mrs. Lincoln to the inaugural ball, thus rebuking the snobs of Washington society who had openly declared they would not attend "the ball of the rail splitter." His support of the President was sincere and wholehearted. He had great faith in Lincoln, and Lincoln showed no less faith in Douglas. They had been ardent rivals all their lives.

Now they linked their wonderful talents in the cause of patriotism, for the preservation of the federal Union.

Soon after Lincoln's arrival in Washington, Douglas requested an interview, and for several hours these two great men counselled together on the safety of their land. What passed between them remains unrecorded, but the imagination loves to linger over the scene of the final conciliation of these great rivals.

On the first day of May, Douglas returned to Chicago. It was his last home-coming, and it was his proudest. His neighbors united in a welcome that has become historic. Republicans and Democrats and Abolitionists assembled at the depot in immense throngs to meet him. They escorted him through streets, crowded with the populace, to the great wigwam where Lincoln had been nominated. Here he addressed a vast assemblage. It was his last public utterance. His words show forth the motives that prompted him in his long career as statesman, and they reveal that underneath the struggle for state rights, there had ever been in his mind the consciousness of national sovereignty.

"If war must come," he said, "if the bayonet must be used to maintain the constitution, I can say before God my conscience is clean. I have struggled long for a peaceful solution of the difficulty. I have not only



tendered these states what was theirs of right, but I have gone to the very extremes of magnanimity. The return we receive is war, armies marched upon our capital, obstruction and dangers to our navigation, letters of marque to invite pirates to prey upon our commerce, a concerted movement to blot out the United States of America from the map of the globe."

He sought for the cause of this warlike procedure. "The slavery question is a mere excuse. The election of Lincoln is a mere pretext. The present secession movement is the result of an enormous conspiracy formed more than a year since, by leaders of the southern Confederacy. They use the slavery question as a means to aid the accomplishment of their ends. \* \* \*

When the history of the two years from the Lecompton charter down to the presidential election shall be written, it will be shown that the scheme was deliberately made to break up this Union. They desired a northern Republican to be elected by a purely northern vote, and thus assign this fact as a reason why the sections may not longer live together. The conspiracy is now known. Armies have been raised, war is levied to accomplish it. There are only two sides to the question. Every man must be for the United States or against it. There can be no neutrals in this war; only patriots, or traitors. \* \* \* We cannot close our

eyes to the sad and solemn fact that war does exist. The government must be maintained, its enemies overthrown, and the more stupendous our preparations, the less the bloodshed, and the shorter the struggle. But we must remember certain restraints on our action, even in time of war. We are a Christian people, and the war must be prosecuted in a manner recognized by Christian nations. We must not invade constitutional rights. The innocent must not suffer, nor women and children be the victims. Savages must not be let loose. But while I sanction no war on the rights of others, I will implore my countrymen not to lay down their arms until our own rights are recognized. The constitution and its guarantees are our birthright, and I am ready to enforce that inalienable right to the last extent.

“We cannot recognize secession. Recognize it once, then have you not only dissolved government, but have you destroyed social order and upturned the foundations of society. You have inaugurated anarchy in its worst form, and will shortly experience all the horrors of the French revolution. Then we have a solemn duty to maintain the government. The greater our unanimity, the speedier the day of peace. We have prejudices to overcome from the few short months of a fierce party contest. Yet these must be allayed. Let us lay

aside all criminations and recriminations as to the origin of these difficulties. When we shall have again a country with a United States flag floating over it, and respected on every inch of American soil, it will then be time enough to ask who and what brought all this upon us.

"It is a sad task to discuss questions so fearful as civil war, but sad as it is, bloody and disastrous as I expect it will be, I express it as my conviction before God, that it is the duty of every American citizen to rally around the flag of his country."

Let these patriotic words be remembered as the fitting peroration to the thousands of speeches Douglas had spoken, during the twenty-five years of his political activity. They contain no sophistry, they are devoid of demagogism, they are not half-truths magnified into deceptive greatness. All those unconscious tricks of the politician have been forgotten in the perils of the hour. They are the frank utterances of a firm believer in nationalism. And how tragic that they should be uttered from the very platform where his great rival received the nomination for the presidency, the nomination that cost Douglas the one great ambition of his life.

Within a few days of his homecoming, Douglas was confined to his bed by an acute malady. From this attack he did not recover. He died on the fourth day of June, 1861. He was only 48 years old.

It is useless to speculate what greater honors he might have won, had he survived the civil war. To the careful student of that period of our history which his activities spanned, it must be evident that Douglas had fulfilled his mission to his country and to his time. He had in his youth espoused the principles of Andrew Jackson, in his early manhood he adopted the compromise of Clay, in his maturity he developed the theory of popular sovereignty, and he died uttering the nationalistic precepts of Abraham Lincoln. What effect his impetuous leadership might have had upon the northern Democrats we cannot surmise. It is enough to know that Douglas carried to its verge the doctrine of state rights; that when he saw the danger this ultimate form of his theories would thrust upon his country, he quickly recoiled, and fully, freely, without stint or reservation he counseled nationalism even through the bloody ordeal of battle.

Nor is it profitable to speculate whether that terrible ordeal was necessary. In that deep, eternal undercurrent of human progress, upon whose bosom mankind is swept onward to the realms of civilization and culture, there are momentary eddies, and there are maelstroms. Man may toy with its majestic tide, but he cannot check it. Human slavery in this free republic was an obstacle to the maximum development of the lofty ideals of a self-governing people. It had to

be removed. Whether the removal was to be accomplished by the orderly progress of civilization, or through the violence of battle, depended upon the citizens of the republic; not upon the plan of human progress. That portion of our citizenship who were particularly responsible for its existence, willed that violence should accompany the purging of the land; that the wrath of man, not his love, his calm judgment, but his wrath, should contribute to the glory of the world's civilization.

To the peaceful solution of the question, Douglas had devoted all the years of his extraordinary activity, all the wonderful endowments of his mind. However much he may have been prompted by an ambition to become President, we now know that he above all desired the peaceful solution of the question of slavery. He ardently believed that popular sovereignty would solve the problem; that the absolute autonomy of every commonwealth in determining for itself the nature of its local institutions would remove the question from political discussion. But his solution was not the solvent of the evil, because he misjudged slavery. It was not a local institution. It was a wrong, a great wrong to humanity. And to right a wrong you must tear it out. When Douglas perceived the true nature of slavery, and learned the extreme efforts its defenders

would make, he threw aside the fallacies of his statesmanship and fervently urged a war for the maintenance of the Union. The Defender of State Rights became the Defender of Nationalism.

Of his talents, history must write him the preëminent debater, the Fox of the American Senate. In the golden days of that deliberative body, he stood among the favored great. He was not tremendous, like Webster, nor emotional, like Clay, nor learned, like Benton, nor <sup>unlike</sup> cultured, like Berrien, nor logical, like Cass, nor rhetorical, like Sumner, nor scholarly, like Everett, nor subtle, like Seward, nor passionate, like Toombs. But, more than any of these, he possessed the readiness of intellect, the talent of forensic strategy, the copious and forcible delivery, the adroitness in evasion, the boldness in aggression, and the unfailing clearness in expression that unite to make the most effective debater.

Not less preëminent were his talents as a politician. When we recall the perilous route over which he journeyed, the treachery of party traitors to which he was subjected, the crushing defeats which ever awaited his presidential aspirations, the final disaster of party shipwreck, every noted adversary, every conspicuous rival, sunken in defeat and disgrace, when we recall these circumstances and see Douglas alone emerge from the tangled ruins, carry-



ing with him one-half of the voters of his party, then we are able to measure his capacity for leadership and his genius for political strategy.

Of his statesmanship history must write that it was at least consistent. He prided himself on this consistency. From the day of his first entrance into Washington to the day of his last utterance in the senate chamber, he was loyal to the principle of non-intervention. Other statesmen changed their views, he remained fixed. The war of the southern states he regarded as a fatal infringement upon the constitutional right of non-intervention, and he counselled an immediate and relentless war on the part of the north, that by compulsion, if not by persuasion, the constitution might be saved. When he became conscious that it was necessary to choose between nationalism or sectionalism, he never faltered. There can be no doubt that his consistency was prompted by absolute sincerity. The great error of his statesmanship was his misjudgment of the nature of slavery and the temper of its advocates.

We of this generation can afford to condone his faults, the sophistries and petty demagogueries, that clung to him and impeded his talents like barnacles impede the progress of a ship, and let the dying message to his sons be the living message of Stephen A. Douglas to his nation. In his last mo-

ment of consciousness upon this earth, his wife whispered to the dying statesman if he had any message to send his two sons. His eyes flashed with their wonted fire, and, raising his voice for the last time, he said: "Tell them to obey the laws and support the constitution of the United States."

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